

*W.J. Pomeroy*

# Soviet Reality in the Seventies



*Progress Publishers  
Moscow*

*William J Pomeroy*

SOVIET REALITY  
IN THE SEVENTIES

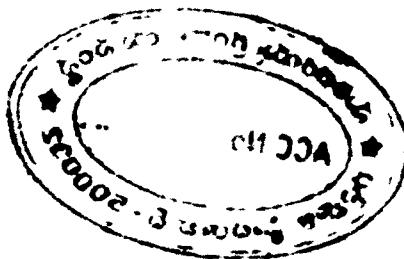
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Other publications by the author *Born  
of the People* (1953)  
*The Forest* (1963)  
*Guerrilla and Counter-Guerrilla War-  
fare* (1964)  
*Half a Century of Socialism* (1967)  
*Apartheid Axis* (1971)  
*Trail of Blame* (1971)

Among his books published in the Soviet Union are *In Deep Jungle* (1965), *Man on the Road* (1968) and *Who Is Guilty* (1969), collections of short stories, and *The Emergence of US Neo-Colonialism* (1973)

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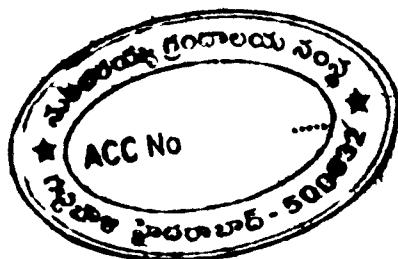
Художественная литература

Уильям Д. Помрой

«СОВЕТСКАЯ ДЕЯТЕЛЬНОСТЬ  
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## INTRODUCTION

Six decades have passed since the October evening in 1917 (November 7 by the new calendar) when Russian working people massed in the streets of the city of Petrograd and marched under the leadership of a revolutionary party known as the Bolsheviks to storm the old Winter Palace of the tsars . That evening, which finally brought the people to power and initiated the world's first socialist state, was one of the great revolutionary moments of history, dramatic, world-shaking, still echoing

Today tourists in their millions, from all countries, walk over the cobblestones in the great square before the Winter Palace now a museum in a city transformed They come from the four corners of the earth to see the birthplace of the new society that came into being on that long-past evening In the city, renamed Leningrad—City of Lenin—after the leader of the Bolsheviks, they may see the new society, socialism, functioning in full maturity, as it functions for over 260 million people in the 15 republics that make up the vast Soviet Union

Consciously or unconsciously, all the world's people since 1917 have been affected by the October Revolution and by the building of a strong socialist system in the multi-nationalities Soviet Union. Those most consciously influenced have been drawn in increasing millions to struggle for socialism in their own countries, while mankind as a whole has benefited enormously from the peace program of the Soviet Union, from peaceful coexistence and detente, from its friendly trade policies and cultural exchanges, its anti-fascist and anti-imperialist stands,

its material aid and solidarity extended to liberation movements and to developing countries around the globe

The events of that revolution in 1917 and of the six decades of building and defending socialism that have followed it have been analysed and hotly discussed perhaps more than any other episode or epoch in history Few human beings can have lived so remotely in the world as to have been unaware of this Much of the outpouring has been praise or passionate defence, but the Soviet Union has also been attacked, criticised and calumniated more than any other country The proponents of monopolist capital have never wanted to forgive, to tell the truth about, or to leave in peace those who have built a new and better way of life

It is symptomatic that controversy has continued about the Soviet Union when more than two generations have been spanned since it was established.

The example set by the USSR has aroused the most profound alarm and fear in the exploiters of all stripes, and in all those who enjoy advantages and individual privileges in the old society that they strive to prolong even when it has outlived its historical usefulness.

It is significant that many of those who have come in increasing numbers to visit the Soviet Union do so precisely because of the questions and attacks directed against it in the countries where they live They come to see for themselves

For the people who live in a capitalist society, with its vast opinion forming and indoctrinating apparatus that has grown tremendously since 1917, the process of coming to understand, to be friendly towards and to defend the Soviet Union can be long and difficult. To some degree, it is akin to that discarding of a chained mentality that swept over the peoples of the old tsarist empire in 1917, enabling them to see clearly who their friends and who their enemies were

One doesn't have to be a revolutionary to develop a friendly attitude towards the Soviet Union—one can do so merely as a respecter of normal relations between peoples—but to arrive at such an outlook in any case usually requires a considerable effort to get to know the new socialist reality.

## *Chapter I*

### GETTING TO KNOW THE NEW REALITY

#### "TEACHERS" AND WOLVES

I was 49 years old, in 1965, before I was able to visit the Soviet Union as the condition known as the "cold war" began to unfreeze, releasing normal human relations. For me, however, it was not a voyage of discovery but a visit of confirmation I had come to see a socialist society that was not a phenomenon new and strange to me, but one that had been a living factor in my life for decades, stirring my imagination, shaping my outlook and my very behaviour.

... I was born and grew up in that bulwark of capitalism, the United States. Although I was born one year to the exact month prior to the date that the Russian people seized revolutionary power, and though my personal growth to maturity occurred literally in parallel to that of the socialist state, I was hardly aware of its existence or of what it stood for until I had left secondary school.

Looking back, I can realise the ideological obstacles and misinformation that had to be overcome in my own mind before I could begin to observe or understand the Soviet Union objectively. Although I come from an American working-class family, my father having been a factory worker all his life, that is no guarantee that I would have a real working-class outlook in a country like the United States.

My earliest recollection of hearing as a schoolchild about the land that had become the Soviet Union was around 1927, in a classroom where geography was taught. Soviet society was then ten years old, but neither the geography textbook we used nor the teacher said anything about the country being the Soviet

Union The textbook had a chapter entitled "Russia" and it was about tsarist Russia, with old illustrations of the Nizhni Novgorod fair and of the reportedly "devout" people entering onion-domed churches

Part of the chapter and of the teacher's lecture were devoted to a story that was supposed to typify Russian life This was the story of a family of Russians racing in the horse-drawn sledge across a snow-covered steppe pursued by wolves. The wolves keep overtaking the sledge and to lighten the load and to distract the pursuers the father keeps throwing the children and then his wife one by one to the wolves, until only the father manages to reach safety That story was the only impression left with my classmates and me about Russia, where life, we felt, must be harsh and brutal

Later, from secondary school, the only recollection that survives for me about "Red Russia," as it was identified by then, is of a visiting lecturer, around 1932 Paid to address our school assembly by the local education department, he claimed to have just been to the Soviet Union

His lecture was a series of anecdotes that all ended with the word "Nichevo" ("it doesn't matter"). The anecdotes were all of despair and of callous indifference to life and progress "under the Bolsheviks" A worker he claimed to have seen in a factory allegedly wrecked a machine out of ignorance, and when he was asked how he felt about it, said "Nichevo" Peasants on a collective farm, he said, let the grain rot in the fields because "it wasn't their own," and sat around saying "Nichevo." A government official, when reportedly asked by our lecturer if the Five-Year Plan (it was the first and was heavily derided in the capitalist countries) would succeed, supposedly replied "Nichevo." There were many such anecdotes, and the lecturer concluded by saying that the Soviet Union could be summed up in one word, "Nichevo."

It all seemed quite consistent for people who reportedly had the habit of throwing each other to the wolves.

## HOW EYES ARE OPENED

In my early years I knew nothing about the Soviet Union except this and similar kinds of propaganda, most of which was absorbed in almost subliminal fashion from the press, periodicals or cinema, creating images of a grey, dreary police state in which listless people had no freedom, no rights, no family life, no consumer goods and not enough food, in which nothing worked right, plans were failures, and the Communists were thugs who terrorised the rest of the population. A Soviet citizen would find it hard to imagine such ceaseless, daily depiction of himself and of his society as being in a kind of prison in which no laughter was ever heard, no opinion was ever expressed, nothing creative was possible, no one worked productively, and certainly no enjoyment of living occurred. Above all, one was led to think, no Soviet citizen really wanted socialism, which was imposed by some kind of a dictatorship.

On the other hand, while the Soviet people supposedly lived in misery and enslavement at home, they were nevertheless reportedly sent abroad in vast numbers as spies, agitators and other kinds of subversive elements to impose this terrible way of life that they hated on the rest of the world.

My own emancipation from this propaganda did not begin to occur until I was nearly 20 years old. Up to that time I had never met a single person who sympathised with or spoke a word of favour for the Soviet Union. It was (and is) possible for most Americans to go through their entire lives without encountering any opinion that might refute the slanders against a socialist country. In my case, perception was associated with trying to find work in the midst of the Great Depression that engulfed the entire capitalist world in the 1930s, when 18 million workers were unemployed in the United States alone. Standing hopelessly in job-hunting queues, without coins to rattle together in one's pockets, can be a great stimulus to an inquiring mind. I started to examine everything about the society around me that had placed me in that condition, seeking out literature and publications that also asked questions and demanded changes. It brought me to the literature of socialism, and to honest descriptions of the

Soviet Union, where no exploitation or unemployment existed  
All of these were very great revelations

When I did find a job in 1937 I worked mainly on the midnight shift in a large factory On a side street near the factory there was a small cinema house One evening, on my way to work, I saw advertised a series of Soviet film classics, the showing arranged by a left-wing group Up to then I had never seen or heard of a Soviet film,

Every evening thereafter before going in to work I saw a film *Battleship Potemkin*, *We Are From Kronstadt*, *Chapayev*, *The Youth of Maxim*, *The Return of Maxim*, *Strike*, *The Mother* and others, besides an array of news films and portrayals of current Soviet life It was a tremendous intellectual and emotional experience for me. I entered the factory each night as if it were the Putilov works in Petrograd, and I was Maxim. My fellow workers to whom I described the films called me "the Commissar"

Soon afterwards I joined a left-wing group and came to know the sense of fulfilment that comes from participation in people's causes, the same anti-fascist, anti-war, pro-democratic causes that the Soviet Union supported It was surprising to me that there were so many other Americans whose eyes had been opened as mine now were

We saw the Soviet Union as the main hope and defender of mankind We cheered, with our hearts in our throats, the Soviet assistance to the Spanish people in their armed resistance to the fascists. At the difficult time of the Soviet-German Pact in 1939 we fought an upstream battle in defence of that step During the protective "winter war" with the Mannerheim fascist regime of Finland, when the capitalist countries rang with reactionary cries for a general anti-Soviet attack, we stood up in unswerving defence of the correctness of that war

For most people, a great clarity came to the international situation when the Red Army began its heroic resistance to the fascist invasion on June 22, 1941 Not only was the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union a universal inspiration, but it made the Soviet Union the outstanding ally of all democratic people everywhere, in all countries. The Soviet people's mission of liberation won them literally universal respect.

During the war years of 1941-1945 anti-Soviet propaganda necessarily became muted and it was possible to have a relatively unimpeded view of a socialist country that was being defended to the death by its devoted citizens. The world watched in solidarity, anxiety and admiration the defence of Leningrad, Odessa, Sevastopol, and Stalingrad. Everybody rejoiced at the routing of the fascist hordes near Moscow.

I spent those war years in the US army, in the various island-to-island campaigns against the Japanese militarists, from Australia to New Guinea, the Philippines and Okinawa all the way to Tokyo, and each step of the way I was conscious of fighting on the same side in the same cause with my Soviet brothers who were advancing simultaneously from the Volga to the Elbe, and doing the main job of smashing the fascist enemy. The unprecedented courage and heroism of the Soviet soldiers brought about that victory over fascism.

#### SOLIDARITY FROM A CELL

When, during the postwar period, the capitalist powers that had felt the need of a Soviet ally to save them from fascist conquest reasserted their imperialist aims and reverted to efforts to "roll back" socialism in the Soviet Union and in the new countries that had become socialist as a result of the crushing of fascism, they had to resort to unprecedented propaganda, repressive laws and disruption of normal relations in order to expunge from their peoples the wartime friendly feelings that they had developed for the Soviet Union. They erected an "iron curtain," a "cold war" and a "containment" policy in order to arouse hatred for the Soviet Union and to isolate the socialist system. The campaign of lies, distortion and misrepresentation exceeded that which had been carried on in the years after 1917.

My own country, the United States, underwent the most intensive and most virulent aspects of that campaign, which was directed not merely at the Soviet Union but at all progressive Americans who called for friendship with the Soviet people and who opposed the militarist preparations for aggression against socialist states and against the liberation movements of the world.

**It was a great testing time for those who would stand up to be counted as friends of the Soviet Union**

During the "cold war" years I was not in the United States. Soon after the end of the war against fascism I had returned to the Philippines, which had been an American colony seized and occupied temporarily by Japan, where I had met, admired and loved the members of the wartime Filipino anti-Japanese guerrilla movement I had returned to work with and then to join the Philippine national liberation movement, as an American anti-imperialist who was determined to act in all ways of solidarity with those fighting for liberation against oppression now emanating from forces in my own country Although the Philippines had been given a nominal independence in 1946, it was immediately subjected to thoroughgoing US neo-colonialism, one feature of which was brutal armed suppression of the national liberation movement that opposed such conditions Along with my Filipino friends, and side by side with the Filipino comrade Celia whom I married, I participated in a long guerrilla resistance struggle that followed

From our guerrilla camps in mountains and forests, we watched with joy the swift reconstruction of the Soviet economy out of the wartime devastation, the Soviet breaking of the United States' nuclear monopoly in a remarkably short time, its blocking of imperialist interventions and provocations, its support for liberation movements, for developing countries, and for world peace. To us, the Soviet Union was our great internationalist friend, and every advance by the Soviet people meant a decline in the chances that imperialist aims in the Philippines and elsewhere might succeed.

Even when our armed liberation struggle was suppressed through US imperialist intervention, and when many of my Filipino comrades and I were captured to be imprisoned with death sentences or life imprisonment, our faith in ultimate freedom and victory was largely sustained by the knowledge that the anti-imperialist forces of the world were steadily growing stronger with the Soviet Union as their vanguard

During the ten years that I was a political prisoner in the Philippines, our jailers never ceased attempts to make us surrender our beliefs. Among these were constant efforts to persuade

us to abandon our trust in the Soviet Union. The US agencies in the Philippines in particular poured upon us anti-Soviet publications, by the hate-merchants of the "cold war," by the emissaries of the imperialist intelligence services, by the "Kremlinologists" who make a profession out of anti-Soviet propaganda.

At the time a barrage of propaganda was directed at us, captive audiences, about Soviet "imperialism." None of us believed the tales about Soviet "aggression," which were, undoubtedly, circulated by the CIA. Our jailers thought that the four walls of a narrow cell could cut off our clear vision of the society that gave us hope.

None of the propaganda or the lectures made the slightest dent in our faith in the Soviet Union or in its socialist system. To us, all the propaganda attention given to us and to it was simply proof of its strength and of its capacity to arouse international support and emulation.

### A MANY-SIDED VIEWPOINT

It was after my wife and I won release from prison, due to a world-wide campaign that deepened further our internationalist feelings, that I was able to make my first visit to the Soviet Union, in 1965.

For thirty years I had lived with an awareness of Soviet power and of its significance for mankind, had learned from it, defended it, shaped my way of life in accordance with its example and the ideas of its founders and leaders. Inevitably a strong element of idealism tends to enter the mental picture of Soviet life retained by many like myself who have felt its influence from afar. Very often it is a poster-like picture of muscular workers holding aloft banners.

Did the reality correspond with the images and the visions? It was only natural that in practice everything proved to be much more complicated. In my case, the impressions that I've received have been multiple because I have been able to view the Soviet Union from a number of standpoints.

First, as an American worker. Having worked, like my father before me, for years in factories and foundries, as labourer and machine-operator, and as trade unionist, I have a worker's appre-

ciation of Soviet planning, production and factory management, of Soviet trade unions and their responsibilities.

Secondly, as a writer I have been a professional writer since 1946, of short stories, poetry, essays, history, and political journalism. I was also interested in science. In 1972 I was awarded a doctorate in history by the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, which was a great honour for me.

Thirdly, as a soldier Having served in the US army throughout World War II, and subsequently with a guerrilla army, I have brought the understanding of a comrade-in-arms to the tremendous achievement by the Red Army and the Soviet guerrillas in smashing the fascist armies, to appreciating the significance of the Great Patriotic War, and to being aware of the dedication to peace by the entire Soviet people, who had suffered more than any other nation during the war.

Fourthly, as a participant in a national liberation struggle in a colonial country Closely identified as I have been with the Filipino people in anti-imperialist struggle, in guerrilla warfare, and in shared long imprisonment, I also see Soviet life and institutions through their eyes. The national development of the Soviet republics, the solution of the agrarian problem, the socialist transformation of pre-capitalist society—these I have seen in relation to the life and conditions of Filipino workers and peasants, and of the hundreds of millions like them in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

In addition, I have lived for many years in Great Britain, and have been able to make comparisons between British circumstances and those of Soviet society.

Since 1965 I have returned with my wife, Celia, to the Soviet Union each year, observing, studying, absorbing. The impressions gained over a decade or more are of a society in dynamic growth, both in the material features of city and countryside and in characteristics of the people. This book is a record of those impressions, by a friend of the Soviet Union.

## *Chapter II*

### LIVING IN A SOCIALIST WAY

On the skylines of all Soviet cities, and across the vast countryside as well, the tall cranes stand always in silhouette, like great nest-building birds. They were everywhere when I first arrived in Leningrad, in Moscow, in Tashkent, and they are everywhere still, changing location but always busy at the task of building.

It is above all a society in construction, which goes on, if anything, more intensively today than when Soviet power was proclaimed or when the First Five-Year Plan was launched in 1929. The sense of newness and freshness, of a society literally springing up on all sides, is ever-present, and it seems constantly to expand rather than to contract or slow down. It is not merely a phenomenon for the eye—the calls and the pronouncements of government, from the Supreme Soviet to the local councils, ring always with the language of growth and expansion, with greater goals, larger plans.

A Soviet friend once said to me “People who have not yet won their way to socialism usually think that the greatest problem is winning the revolutionary struggle for power. Actually, the problems only begin with the attainment of people’s power. The real problems are in organising the new society, in mobilising the people in unified production efforts, in preparing and carrying out plans that have never before been attempted. Building, and constructing, and erecting something new is always more difficult than tearing down something that is old.”

I have never forgotten this. It needs to be kept in mind by

everyone who looks critically from afar at what the Soviet people have done, and are doing

In their streets, Soviet citizens are perpetually having to detour on boardwalks along hoardings that enclose construction sites, or to balance across ditches for water mains, gas mains, power lines I did this in 1965, around hoardings in the Arbat district of Moscow A few visits later and the magnificent wide avenue of modern buildings, Kalinin Prospect, stood there in dazzling vista.

This year, says the plan in 1978, there will be 3 5 million square metres of new housing in Moscow alone, and I have no doubt that the plan has been put to life The same can be observed in dozens of cities and towns of all the Soviet republics

.. One of the great esthetic thrills today is to approach Moscow from its airport, or by any highway, and to see the immense panorama of white and tinted new tower housing, widely spaced, landscaped along very broad avenues. In the older cities this is chiefly a phenomenon of the outer rings, but there are many cities in the western regions of the country (Minsk, for example) almost totally rebuilt, from centre to city limits, from the ruins left behind by the Nazi invaders, while in the eastern regions extending over Siberia new cities have grown faster in recent years than the cartographers can chart them, an admirable achievement

The countryside, too, is a scene of construction that has unfolded visibly in recent years. On the collective and state farms as well as in the towns the apartment block with all amenities has been replacing the older peasant house, and the department, food and service stores have risen literally beside the peasant's private vegetable plot. This is a part of what the Soviet Union means by equalising or removing the differences between the cities and the countryside

All is vigour and creation, a state of being that has been remarkably sustained for over 60 years. I believe that the most remarkable features of the Soviet people include optimism, lofty moral standards and desire to do creative work. Each citizen regards himself a master in his country he is building it and is responsible for its future This constructive drive has become for me all the more impressive with each year because

of the mounting contrast with conditions in the United States, Britain and the Philippines with which I am familiar There, stagnation, deterioration, and a decline in facilities have become increasingly prevalent as crisis saps the energies of the society. Each year the contrast between the vitality of the Soviet system and the chronic social ills of capitalist society has been more vivid

It is not difficult, therefore, to understand why certain groups in the capitalist countries today seek to impede the development of detente and peaceful co-existence they are aware of the impact to be made upon a citizen of New York, London or Manila who would find it freer under detente to visit and to see for himself or herself the real nature of a socialist society

### ABSENT CAPITALISTS, EXISTING ABUNDANCE

As one who believes in the system of socialism, I arrived in the Soviet Union for the first time with a mixture of anticipation and anxiety Along with the pleasure of seeing in reality that about which I had dreamed, I carried a small lingering concern over what I would find, bred like a germ by decades of anti-Soviet propaganda that can have an unconscious effect even when one believes it to be untrue A great many like me—Americans, Englishmen, Filipinos—sincere workers for a new society, have approached the Soviet Union in the same way, expecting beliefs to be confirmed, but also wanting involuntary questions to be laid to rest

The physical sight of Soviet construction, that vision of an expanding society, is in itself a powerful answer to questions For the Filipino peasant accustomed to a furnitureless house of bamboo and thatch, the sight is awesome, and when told that the immense number of comfortable houses has been built for the Soviet citizens in the past thirty years and handed over to them as a rule free of charge, it is all the more impressive He is especially impressed by the fact that it was done without landlords or foreign imperialists

Of course, the key difference between New York and Moscow, and between London and Leningrad, is not one of architecture

or construction techniques, but of who owns the construction units that do the building, and the structures that are built, and of who benefits from them

A classical case exists in the middle of London, a mammoth many-room tower block, *Centre Point*, that was finished in 1966 but was still empty in 1978. It has never had a tenant. It was built solely for property speculation, its value to its owner growing as it sits there empty, due to the soaring cost of land and property in an age of massive inflation. Homeless Londoners, who are totally without a place to live, have demonstrated before *Centre Point* demanding that it be turned into apartment dwellings, but they have been ignored. The private ownership of land and of a great number of buildings by a small number of the wealthy, who extract very high rents, is the invisible resident of the capitalist cities.

I knew that in the Soviet Union I would find an absence of capitalists or bankers or landlords, an absence of corrupt politicians who carry out the private wishes of the capitalist or the landlord. They would be absent because they were cast off by the October Revolution, because they are incompatible with a socialist society, in which all land and factories are socially owned, and which serves the interests of the great mass of the ordinary people, the Soviet citizens.

In travelling extensively and talking to many people, I have not only never encountered exploiters, but I have never met or heard of anyone who in any way wanted their return.

One of the main anti-Soviet propaganda themes is that a non-capitalist system cannot be efficient and cannot produce an abundance of commodities.

In the post-war years, it was possible for such propaganda to get away with depicting Soviet life, or a version of it, in an unfavourable way, at least as far as material benefits were concerned. That was in the days before the five-year plans of the socialist economy had laid the basis for a great rise in living standards. It took time to erect the industries and the constructive capacity before those vast areas of new housing and modern facilities could be mass-produced.

Descriptions and photographic evidences were prevalent in

the capitalist media in those past days of drably-clad Soviet people standing in queues before stores with nearly-empty shelves, of families crowded together in rooms of old run-down houses and of roughly-dressed peasants. It was convenient and satisfying for capitalist apologists to turn a spotlight on the conditions of the Soviet people when they were sacrificing to lay a heavy industrial base for their chosen system because some material aspects of life in advanced capitalist countries at that time could be made to appear more attractive and more abundant.

In a country like the Philippines, where the vast majority of the people have lived for centuries in abject poverty due to colonialism, a propagandising of the most glossy aspects of the "American way of life" has been constantly projected beside images of the alleged "Soviet backwardness" in order to persuade poor Filipinos to keep their faces and hopes turned toward the US example instead of toward the way of development the Soviet people had taken

In recent decades, however, descriptions or picturisations of contemporary Soviet life have tended to diminish in the capitalist media. These still delight in printing pictures of an old village hut due for demolition on the outskirts of an expanding Soviet city as typical, instead of the huge new modern housing areas mushrooming a few hundred yards away, but it is increasingly difficult to pass this off as credible. Filipinos or Americans themselves who haven't seen a Soviet city know at least of Soviet space achievements and that these are impossible without highly developed technology and industries. It cannot be disguised that the Soviet Union is ranked with the United States as one of the two leading industrial powers in the world. The fact is that the increasing material abundance in Soviet life has become more and more difficult to hide or to ignore by those who try to prove that capitalism is the better provider.

So great has become the socialist production of material benefits that capitalist propaganda, unable to conceal or deny the fact, has undergone a subtle shift instead of the caricature of an undernourished Soviet worker who can find nothing to buy in state stores with his supposedly meager wages, the cartoon that is now drawn is of a gross Soviet citizen who has lost his

socialist outlook through being corrupted by the "consumer society" that socialism has allegedly become. The attempt is made to discredit socialism by ascribing to it the material greed, egoism and even political apathy that are in actual fact associated with capitalism.

The intention is to confuse the many people in countries like the US and Britain, where more importance is placed on the selling of goods for profit, especially goods with a "built-in obsolescence," than on people and their welfare, and where the pursuit and accumulation of consumer goods is encouraged as a sign of social superiority. By making it appear that a profusion of consumer goods has the same effect in the Soviet Union, it is hoped to divert people in capitalist countries from turning to socialism as a solution.

The other source of such a portrayal is Maoism, which has attempted to conceal the severe exploitation of Chinese workers and peasants carried on as part of a great power complex in order to make underdeveloped China a nuclear military power, by advocating a doctrine of poverty as a virtue and by attacking material benefits as capitalist and corrupting. By trying to make it appear that the Soviet Union has become "capitalist" in making the life of its workers and peasants materially comfortable, the Maoist leaders have sought to impose low living standards and self-denial on the Chinese people.

These arguments that distort the meaning of socialist production, whatever the source or intention, have no relation whatsoever to the growth of well-being in life under socialism.'

#### THE SOCIALIST CONSUMER

One of my first acts in 1965, on my initial visit to the Soviet Union, was to look through a number of stores of every type in each Soviet city I visited. At that time the great Soviet breakthrough to mass-produced consumer goods over and above essentials, of every kind both durable and non-durable, was already getting under way. And people whom I met were justified in taking pride in those quality products.

It has been fascinating each year to go to the same stores, or to the new ones as they have sprouted, and to observe the proliferation of commodities, the increasing variety in styles and quality of the clothing worn, the furnishings, decorations and gadgetry

One of the features of life under socialism today is the increasing ability of the economy to make available the necessary goods to everyone desiring them To cite one item of interest in 1960 the number of washing machines in homes was 895,000, by 1977, 67 out of every 100 families had a washing machine, and 4,135,000 were bought by families in 1970 alone In these respects, the material comforts of a Soviet citizen are little different today from those of well-paid employed people in the West, and whatever item may not be available at the moment, as my Soviet friends have told me, "We will soon have."

Certainly a proof of the viability of socialism is its capacity to achieve a high level of industrialisation that can turn out an abundance of top-quality consumer goods for all This has been done efficiently, and what is more, on a far more equitable basis of distribution than capitalism

To assert that poverty has virtues, and that there are superior moral qualities in self-denial and self-sacrifice regarding material benefits, as some ultra-left or Maoist elements have contended as part of their anti-Soviet arguments, is to reinforce a system of exploitation.

It should be pointed out that this is not an outlook to be found among workers in any country In my years as a factory worker, I never heard such ideas advanced by anyone on a shop-floor (anyone who did would be derided as a tool of the bosses), nor by any worker I have met in the United States, Britain, the Philippines or elsewhere workers are perpetually engaged in struggles for wage increases to improve living standards or merely to hold on to those that they have It is of note that the only places where I have heard such arguments against material benefits from labour have been in after-dinner chats over the coffee table in middle-class homes well-equipped with the material accoutrements of capitalism

Most of the mature population of the Soviet Union are in a position to give evidence on this question they have experienced both the past absence and the present abundance of consumer goods. A plump professor in the Academy of Sciences, now watching his diet, driver of his own car, has told me of eating potato peelings for years in his youth and in the early post-war years. A great many of those in their 40s, 50s and 60s, I have noticed, have persistent ailments of debilitation from the hard years of the war.

Growing abundance has not corrupted life, it has enriched it. The theory that a "consumer society" can stifle socialism in the Soviet Union is downright false

One of the most remarkable aspects, furthermore, of the rise in living standards and in material well-being of the Soviet citizen has been the steady rise in real income and the absence of inflation that erodes incomes in the United States, Britain and other non-socialist countries

From 1940 to 1976 the real incomes of Soviet factory and office workers rose 36 times, while in the same period the real incomes of collective farmers jumped 6 times. The average monthly wages of Soviet industrial and office workers went up from 64.2 rubles in 1950 to 154 rubles in 1977. The guidelines envisage a rise in the output of manufactured goods from 35 to 39 per cent and in the agricultural output from 14 to 17 per cent by the end of the current, Tenth Five-Year Plan period in 1980. Income taxes were either sharply reduced or eliminated for most workers in these years. All this is quite impressive and should be borne in mind when comparisons are made with the working people's well-being in the West. Thus, when the present Tenth Five-Year Plan is completed in 1980, the planned increase in the output of industrial goods by 35-39 per cent and of farm products by 14-17 per cent will boost workers' wages to 170 rubles per month

In contrast, the real incomes of workers in the major capitalist countries have been steadily declining. For British workers this has been particularly serious between 1974 and 1976 real wages in Britain fell by a grave 10 per cent. A study published in 1977 stated that the position of the ordinary working American had actually deteriorated in the past decade. Real wages

had actually fallen (The head of a family can afford one suit every four years, for example) That is not an affluent society

The lot of the Filipino workers is even worse In recent years they have suffered grim reductions in real income mainly because their country's economy has been tied closely to the major capitalist countries that are in deep crisis Despite serious efforts at industrial development by their government, Filipino workers underwent a cut of more than 15 per cent in real incomes from 1973 to 1976 because of massive "imported inflation" American capital is keeping the Filipino economy in irons.

Each year for a decade or more I have visited and have made purchases in Soviet stores and have kept an accounting of them The prices for foodstuffs remain practically unchanged and this condition of stable food prices and rising personal incomes has brought significant beneficial changes in diet

Consumer durable goods, on the other hand, have been steadily cut in price as their production has increased I recall visiting a store in 1970 with a friend who was looking for a TV set "I think I'll wait until next year," he said, "when the prices will be lower" This surprised me, because no shopper in London or New York would calculate in such a way, if they waited it would be to save enough money to meet a price that would be certain to rise.

In the Soviet Union in 1971, however, there were cuts of price of 15-25 per cent for TV sets, motorcycles, electric razors, rain-coats and plastic goods. In 1972 TV sets were cut by an average of another 20 per cent. In 1973 the prices of a large number of garments were reduced In 1974 there were cuts in prices of radios, sports and recreation goods, and household goods Durable goods were again reduced in price in 1976 In January 1978 price cuts were made in knitted wear, radio sets, television sets, refrigerators, electric razors, vacuum cleaners, tape recorders and many other items At the same time the cost of certain services and prices of jewelry and so on were raised as a result of supply and demand regulations.

During the years between 1965 and 1976 when I observed life in the Soviet Union, the annual retail trade turnover more

than doubled, from an index figure of 423 (1940=100) to an index figure of 893, an indication that people bought well over double the amount of commodities in the space of a decade

Capitalist propaganda has further sought to discredit the commodity production it can no longer deny by claiming that Soviet consumer goods are "shoddy." There was a time when this was true in a great many cases. However, since the latter 1960s there has been strong emphasis on quality as well as quantity in Soviet production, and the introduction of "the Soviet seal of quality," a mark or symbol printed on the label of all products meeting strict standards, has greatly improved commodities. In the 1976-1980 Five-Year Plan a lower economic growth level has been set in order to give major attention to quality

A Soviet-made raincoat of synthetic material (kapron) that I bought in 1966 still serves me perfectly and looks the same as when it was purchased. A Soviet transistor portable radio from the VEF plant in Riga, also acquired in 1966 and used daily since, is also as good as the day I obtained it. A Soviet camera that I've used for ten years produces the finest, sharpest colour prints in my experience.

It is a strange argument that would claim that the production of abundance, or the steady rise in living standards, is socially harmful. The consumer society under capitalism, and its advertising and selling techniques, tends to distort and de-humanize the production-consumption relationship. The fact of "conspicuous consumption" by the wealthy minority and the gross contrast between this and the inability of the poor to buy necessities, let alone luxuries, is the starting point for the disillusionment over the consumer society. What is socially harmful is not the providing of material benefits for everyone on an ascending scale but the capitalist anarchy of production that results in an alternation between periods of relative prosperity and periods of severe crisis that cause an abrupt fall in capacity to consume and, hence, in living standards.

The Soviet Union with its planned economy knows no economic crises, slumps of production or strikes, which are asso-

ciated with any capitalist country The fact that the growing demands of the population are being met steadily and in a well-balanced way is a tremendous achievement of socialism and a law of its development

There is no wide disparity in Soviet incomes, no poverty of one group to contrast with the affluence of another Since incomes are based on work done, merit, and socially-useful contribution, there are degrees of difference in earnings, but it is not extreme In any given housing unit it is likely that a factory worker, a driver, a government employee, a university professor, a writer or a leading Party cadre may be found living in adjoining flats of the same size, paying the same rent, their furnishings differing as tastes dictate, not incomes

### PRIVATE CARS AND PUBLIC INTEREST

The only consumer commodity that has provoked a social issue in the Soviet Union has been the private car, the large-scale production of which has been made possible with the huge plant at Togliatti, on the Volga. I have heard this issue debated for years among my Soviet friends, in a way that has never occurred among people in a capitalist country The capitalist press, after trumpeting for decades about every American or British worker being able to have one or even two cars in his garage while the Soviet worker has none, has now been playing up the private car as a corrupting object for socialism now that the Soviet Union can produce it in abundance

Soviet citizens have not been concerned with the effects of private possession so much as with consequences of pollution, traffic jams, use of urban space, and disfiguring of countryside and cities by highways. It is seen as more of an ecological question than of a challenge to socialist principles Many have felt that the answer lies in a greater expansion of public transport that would not require so many vehicles or so much dislocation of communities

An interview published in the *Literaturnaya Gazeta* (No 11, March 1971) with an expert on transport, Corresponding Member of the USSR Academy of Sciences D P Velikanov, dis-

cussed the private car ownership question that had brought a flood of readers' letters

"Q Some of the letters of our readers say that the sale of private cars is a concession to the feeling of private ownership and is incompatible with our ideals

A How many such letters are there?

Q Some dozens, out of about five hundred

A I thought there could not be many But one can understand this point of view Some ten years ago, it was often said that a private car does not correspond to a socialist way of life and that for that reason there is no need of increasing the number of private cars But this is nothing more than a hasty and subjective judgment Now the generally accepted is a more rational point of view if everyone can afford a car—and that will certainly be the case—then it should be regarded as any other durable—a refrigerator, washing machine, television set, bicycle, or any other sports equipment, etc. What can be 'corruptive' about possessing a useful article that all can afford?

Q I am afraid that some readers will think that I have oversimplified their thought There are letters which do not speak so much of a private car as being 'corruptive' but that in our social order we should give more thought to more effective ways of using cars There are letters about the spread of taxis, hired cars, about the organisation of car co-operatives and so on

A That is a different question Methods of using cars more effectively is really a broad subject.

Taxis, I believe, should be more widespread in our country than in Western countries As a taxicab, a car proves the most efficient of all, though a lot of drivers are required Naturally, a taxi is a most convenient means of transportation. There are many cases when they are used, and will continue to be used, even by those who own cars for urgent, unforeseen trips, one-way trips as to a railway station or airfield, and so on Taxis are convenient for both the elderly and for the very youngest. There will, probably, be many people whose need in a car will be fully satisfied by the taxi service, and they will not wish to

own a car I am sure that even in the most distant future that we can imagine, with the most perfect running of our society, taxis will still be necessary

Hired cars? That is something that is both useful and necessary. At one time car hire stations were being set up with great haste, but then the whole idea was discarded just as quickly. The valuable idea was undermined by insufficiently well-thought-out forms of realising it. And that is a pity! Do you know that even in the USA, a country oversaturated with cars, hiring of cars exists and fully justifies itself? And that is not the only place. Once in London's airport I saw a legend read something like this if you forgot to order a hired car in the city you are flying to, you can rectify this over the phone. Next came a list of cities where a hired car could wait for you at the airport. Convenient? Certainly

Our task is to find the best form of organising the hired car service. They can be hired by people who are on business trips, by those who only need a car on their days off, for their vacation, or from time to time. Thus, yet another part of the population, by using taxis and hired cars, will fully satisfy their 'car' needs

And still there will remain many people who will necessarily wish to have a car of their own. Very well, let them own a car! The important thing is that every citizen should be able to use a car in the way that is most convenient for him"

This interview, which together with readers' letters, is typical of the way public questions are discussed in the Soviet press, deals further at length with the matters of pollution, traffic, saturation and planning, and contains the assertion that in cities the great emphasis should be on public transport. As Veli-kanov concludes. "We should make it so owning a private car would be pleasure. And while retaining in cities a priority for mass public transport, we can be sure that automobilisation will develop quite rationally"

## PUBLIC OWNERSHIP AND SOCIAL CONSUMPTION

There is a running game that I play each year with a Soviet friend in Moscow. I relate to him what my friends and I are currently paying in London and New York for rent, transportation, electricity, medical care, holidays and other needs and services, and we compare them with the unchanging costs of Soviet services. It is mostly a matter of measuring the widening gap, and is like keeping score in the contest between systems, to see which one is ahead, and how far.

This, too, has to do with living standards. It is significant that capitalist propaganda always steers away from this aspect of socialism.

Propaganda about an "anti-socialist consumer society" existing in the Soviet Union seeks to consider the Soviet people's well-being in isolation from the basic features of the Soviet system. These are the public ownership of the means of production, of the land, and of all the industrial, administrative, educational, cultural and other facilities.

Earned incomes form the basis of personal property. Article 13 of the new (1977) Soviet Constitution imposes rigid limits on its use under no circumstances, can it be a source of exploitation of the labour of others?

In a socialist society the social product should be divided two ways, into accumulation (for reproduction) funds, and consumption funds. The accumulation funds are for new investment and operational purposes, the consumption funds go to public services and social benefits.

It may be seen from this that the personal income, with which personal possessions or consumer goods are bought, is only one aspect of Soviet living standards. Public services and social benefits, paid for by what are usually called *social* consumption funds, make up an enormous part of Soviet well-being, a part that the people in the United States, Britain or the Philippines pay for out of their own personal incomes.

This includes free education through university level, free medical care, pensions, social insurance, paid holidays, vouchers to health resorts either free or discounted, pre-school nursery

care, stipends for students in higher schools, sports facilities, and the setting of a wide range of services at a very low-cost level. In 1974 the value of these social consumption fund items added the equivalent of 49 rubles to every person's monthly wage.

As national income grows there is a proportional rise in social consumption funds. In 1970 the payments and benefits made available to citizens amounted to 69.9 billion rubles, in 1976 these had risen greatly, to 94.5 billion rubles, and by 1980 they are planned to grow to 115 billion rubles of actual paid-out benefits in excess of wages.

The Soviet people, as far as I know, always enjoyed the benefits of social consumption funds, even during the rehabilitation period in the twenties. Social consumption funds have been and continue to be an integral feature of the Soviet way of life, the social gains of the working people and a guarantee of their improving living standards.

People in capitalist and developing countries often find socialist benefits hard to believe and few come to realize that they are not feasible as long as capital is in power. For instance, the cost of medicines and medical care in the United States, considered part of "free enterprise," is so great that many people cannot afford to go to a doctor or to hospital.

The principle of free medical services and many other free or extremely low-cost services in the Soviet Union extends to every facility enjoyed by the Soviet citizen. Soviet society is far ahead of the capitalist countries as far as meeting the needs of the working people is concerned.

It may be of interest to compare for example, the cost of services and cultural facilities. Electricity in the Soviet home costs an average family no more than 2 rubles per month. In Britain for the three winter months of January-March 1977 my electricity bill was 124 pounds or the equivalent of 159 rubles, i.e., 53 rubles per month. Laundry (there are 700 laundries in Moscow alone) is paid for by the weight, costing a mere 20 kopecks for a kilo of whites, 27 kopecks for a kilo of coloureds. In Britain at the beginning of 1977 a similar weight in a laundromat cost 60 pence or the equivalent of 77 kopecks, for merely washing and drying but not ironing. The Soviet cinema

may cost as little as 10-20 kopecks, the highest price being 50-70 kopecks for a first class seat in the evening. In Britain the average 1977 price in a neighbourhood cinema was nearly 2 pounds, or nearly 3 rubles, while the prices in first class city-centre cinemas could be 50 per cent higher.

Bringing culture to the people at the lowest possible cost to them is part of this socially-oriented provision of services, affecting everything from theatre admissions to book prices. In the Soviet Union the average hardcover book is 2 rubles, and well-bound paperbacks are about 1 ruble. However, the book prices in the capitalist countries have soared virtually beyond the means of the average citizen. A new hardcover novel in 1977 in the USA or Britain was the equivalent of 6.50 rubles to 10 rubles. A non-fiction book commonly costs 16 to 20 rubles. Paperback prices had risen too from 1.50 rubles to 4 rubles.

Low-cost or free Soviet public services and culture are possible because of the public ownership of the means of production, the elimination of private profit, and the assumption by the state of operational and maintenance costs. These are best understood when compared with the systems of public ownership or nationalisation of some public services like transportation and electric power in large capitalist countries. Invariably such steps have embodied not the socialist principle of providing public services at nominal cost but a capitalist principle of preserving the profit system. A public transport system in a capitalist country is therefore required by law to make a substantial profit each year, which it does by making the people pay continually rising passenger fares. Between 1965 and 1977 in London the fare on the underground increased ten-fold, by 1977 it cost the equivalent of 1.50 rubles to ride from one end of an underground line to the other.

Transportation, a constantly rising expense absorbing an ever-greater part of the income of the Londoner, the New Yorker or the Filipino in Manila, is a minuscule cost to the Soviet citizen. In any Soviet city the metro costs 5 kopecks for any distance and for any number of changes, which in the West are paid for separately, the bus 5 kopecks, the trolleybus 4 kopecks, the tram 3 kopecks. These prices have not changed for many decades. Train and air travel are correspondingly low, and the So-

viet motorist pays much less for his petrol than does the British or American car-owner

An objective Western observer will see that material well-being in the Soviet Union is most of all underpinned by this guarantee of low-cost services or free benefits. The personal possessions and comforts that are added to continually by means of the steadily higher wages and incomes are like a superstructure on top of this factor of social stability. Wages that have risen also in capitalist countries (where workers have to fight bitterly for them) have in comparison brought less material benefit because they are absorbed by the soaring cost of public services, rents and prices, all kept unchanged for the Soviet people.

One of the themes to be found in anti-Soviet propaganda, purportedly coming from the ultra-left, is that the better life becomes for the Soviet people, the further they move from socialist or communist ideals. The personally-owned automobile allegedly separates people and families from one another, as if closing a car door shuts them out of socialist society.

This kind of argument has also been used to try to discredit, of all things, the gigantic Soviet housing program. It is alleged that by giving every family its own separate flat, individual and anti-collective tendencies are encouraged. From the Maoist 'communes' in some Western cities, made up mostly of petty-bourgeois social drop-outs, the idea emanates that socialism was "purer" in the early days when many Soviet people had to live crowded in insufficient and inadequate houses. At least they lived communally, it is said which is sheer nonsense.

In a new flat in the Yugo-Zapad district of Moscow I met Elena, an office worker, who had previously lived in an old pre-revolution building in the central part of the city, where five families were crowded in as many rooms, sharing the same kitchen and toilet facilities. I suppose you would say we had communal circumstances,' she said. It meant constant bickering and quarrelling over the use of the facilities, and we all longed for family privacy. We lived under tension, which we were inclined to take out on passengers in the bus or metro each morning, or on our fellow-shoppers in the stores, so the tension effects extended beyond our own building's walls. Let

me tell you that there is no tension in this new block where we all have our own flats. The people here work better in their factories because they can have better rest and relaxation at home. But we don't live in isolation. This block is a collective—commune, if you prefer—and we work together to maintain it and to solve the problems that concern it. We are all comradely and help each other."

Stability and enrichment of life in the Soviet Union, which go to make up the material well-being of its people, occur in a setting of social security that has been made possible by the socialist system.

### *Chapter III*

## CAPITALISM'S FEARS, SOCIALISM'S SECURITY

Each time I have returned to capitalist surroundings after a trip to the Soviet Union the difference has been keenly noticeable. It is not a matter so much of the material surfaces of life, of outward geographical appearances, but rather a question of atmosphere, having to do with what is sometimes called the quality of life (of course, viewed differently by bourgeois ideologists and Soviet scholars)

I have never been in a Soviet city or town where I did not feel secure, in my person and in regard to my possessions, being without fear of disturbance or molestation in the rooms where I stayed, and able to go anywhere at any time of the day or night, afoot or by transport, without being bothered in the streets. In addition, in any transactions with Soviet citizens, whether in stores, restaurants, street stalls, taxis or ticket offices, I have never encountered anything but scrupulous honesty and helpfulness.

It is an atmosphere in which one does not feel social tensions or any stimulation of gross motives or behaviour. This is observable in the absence of aggressive or suggestive advertising, in the total lack of literature of pornography or crime or sensation from bookstores and newsstands, in the television programmes that are devoid of violence or of any theme that slanders or demeans, in the similarly presented radio programmes, in the deep humanism of the cinema, in the high cultural level of the theatre and concert hall performances, in the creative use of leisure time in the trade union or collective farm houses of

culture, in the healthy mass participation in sports of every variety

A return from this to New York London or Manila can be a jolting experience that begins with the first glimpse of a newspaper's sensational headlines. The news is of murder, fraud, crisis, unemployment, Communist bogeymen. One's guard goes up in relations with anyone outside an intimate circle of friends. The caution returns about walking in sidestreets at night or riding on late night subway or underground trains or buses, and one is self-reminded of the house burglaries that occur one every three seconds, according to statistics. Trust in one's fellow man declines abruptly.

The sense of security that I have felt in the Soviet Union is really a sense of safety in a society where people do not prey on each other, encouraged not to do so by the motivations a socialist society instills. If I have felt secure as a visitor, the Soviet people themselves have their own feelings of security concerning their lives in general, feelings that contribute to the comparative lack of personal and social tension that may be noted. I have spent much time in the Soviet Union trying to understand the underlying causes of the sensations one feels in its cities that are so different from those felt in New York or London or Manila.

Soviet lack of tension or of dangerous social problems, I have concluded, is due primarily to the absence of the great social fears that haunt the lives of people in capitalist countries—the fear of unemployment, the fear of not being able to educate or clothe one's children, the fear of the cost of being sick, the fear of uncared-for and impoverished old age, the fear of the people across the street who may have a different colour or a different racial or cultural background, the fear of not being able to pay the rent and of being evicted from a home, the fear of inflation and high taxes that wipe out incomes, the fear of war that is constantly played up to prepare people for acceptance of aggressive foreign policies and vast military budgets.

In the Soviet Union none of these fears exists.

## WORK AS A RIGHT

A trade unionist or any worker in the United States, Britain or the Philippines should imagine what it would mean for himself and his fellow workers if his country's Constitution contained a provision like this

"Citizens of the USSR have the right to work (that is, to guaranteed employment and pay in accordance with the quantity and quality of their work, and not below the state-established minimum), including the right to choose their trade or profession type of job and work in accordance with their inclinations, abilities, training and education, with due account of the needs of society"

This right is ensured by the socialist economic system, steady growth of the productive forces, free vocational and professional training improvement of skills, training in new trades or professions, and development of the systems of vocational guidance and job placement."

This is Article 40 in the Soviet Constitution

A Soviet worker in any field—industry agriculture or office—has absolute job protection. Factory managers cannot arbitrarily fire workers except for an extraordinary reason of grave anti-social behaviour or for doing serious harm to production, and in any case it cannot be done without the approval of his trade union. Besides the Constitutional guarantee of work, the nature of the socialist planned economy of growth assures jobs.

Anti-Soviet propaganda claims that the workers are literally confined to their jobs, whereas in fact, as I realized, there is considerable labour mobility and job-changing

It seems incredible in the West that unemployment is completely non-existent in the Soviet Union, the case actually being one of labour shortage. The availability of jobs, and the need for both skilled and unskilled workers in a variety of occupations may create a situation unthinkable in capitalist countries. The occasional person who may be indifferent to getting a job may be socially ostracised and denounced as an idler or a social parasite since it is not the society that has caused his situation but his own failure to live up to his obligations in a society that honours work above all.

In the entire non-socialist part of the world unemployment is one of the great scourges, bringing poverty, hunger, destruction of family life, the pitting of worker against worker in the job market, providing the seeds of crime, demoralisation and even fascism.

From 1934 to 1937, after leaving high school in the United States, I was wholly unemployed and unable to find work. I know well the effect of this upon young people in particular, whose introduction to supposedly productive maturity is a wastetime of hours in queues seeking work, in hanging around street corners, and in getting tipsy as a means of getting away from boredom. Cynicism and social indifference are the consequences for those who do not turn to forms of rebellion that frequently are destructive.

As I am writing these pages, all capitalist countries are again in a deep trough of economic crisis. There are usually 10 million workers unemployed in the United States, 15 million in West Germany, 15 million in Britain, over a million in France and in Italy and in Japan. I have just seen a television programme of interviews with young school-leavers in Britain who for a year have been jobless. In mid-1976 there are 200,000 such young people in Britain. They say, 'There is nothing for us. We have no future. It is hopeless.' A government employment adviser is interviewed, he says, 'It is sad for me to say this, but many of these young people will probably have no real employment for the rest of their lives.'

Forty years have passed since I had that same experience. Nothing has changed basically in capitalism in that time. Technology has advanced, but the right to work, to job security, remains unattained. There have been periods of prosperity, and at one time US capitalism boasted that it had become 'the affluent society,' but within most workers is the gnawing fear 'It can't last. The depression will come again and I'll be out of a job. I won't be able to keep up the payments on what I've been buying, and I'll be out on the streets.'

One of the leading economic theories of capitalism today is the alleged need or theoretical benefit of a large permanent pool of unemployed, as a means of controlling inflation and the pressure by workers for higher wages. It is harmful, says the

theory, to have full employment, to run the economy at high gear, to utilize all productive capacity. The experience of the socialist community, however, gives the lie to such theories.

In the Soviet Union work is not only a legal right, it is ennobled and made the highest social function. Labour is not regarded as a commodity to be sold in the market place but as the social contribution of each man and woman in a planned society collectively owned and shared. The Hero of Socialist Labour, the outstanding worker, is the most respected figure in the society. It is a bit difficult today and a stretch of the imagination for a Soviet worker to try to put himself or herself in the place of the jobless auto worker of Detroit, the laid-off steel worker of the British midlands, or the labourer in Manila unable to find any work at all. The need rather is for the precariously-employed or socially-discarded workers of the US, Britain and the Philippines to become fully aware of the freedom from fear of unemployment that the Soviet worker knows.

#### THE SECURITY OF OLD AGE

The British 19th century poet, Robert Browning, invited readers to grow old along with him, the best was yet to be. In Britain and its fellow capitalist countries, growing old in the best way is still "yet to be". Old age, instead, is a life-long worry, if not a desperate outlook.

For Soviet people, however, old age is not a problem, and the serenity of the aged is one of the noticeable features of life in the Soviet Union. Article 43 of the Soviet Constitution says 'Citizens of the USSR have the right to maintenance in old age, in sickness, and in the event of complete or partial disability or loss of the breadwinner.'

.. Social insurance, including for old age pensions, is a responsibility wholly assumed by the state, there are no deductions from wages to make up the social insurance fund, as in the United States, Britain and the rest of the capitalist countries.

Furthermore, the pensionable age is low, 55 for women, 60 for men (and in certain strenuous or dangerous industries it is set 5 to 10 years lower). A variety of special pensions cover disabilities, military service and other cases. Pensions are not

taxed and pensioners may continue working to receive supplementary incomes. In 1977 there were 46 million pensioners in the Soviet Union one in every five to six inhabitants

Soviet family relationships are usually close and most frequently as I have seen in the homes of friends, the elderly are to be found in the households of their children or grandchildren. For those left alone and unable to manage on their own or desirous of companionship, there is a network of Homes for the Aged of which there were over 1 500 in 1977, accommodating 340 000 elderly people. My wife visited one of these institutions in Moscow and reported these observations to me enthusiastically.

"Every comfort of home is found there. A single old person may share a room with another, or a couple may live together. The rooms are cozy, large well-lit, well-decorated and furnished. I saw flowers in all the rooms provided by the home, radios, television, books, art objects. There is a cinema room, and a recreation hall for performances of the dramatic and musical groups they have among themselves. A staff of doctors and nurses gives medical care, free of course, and there is a clinic and hospital room. All residents are given work-shop facilities to do the useful work they wish to continue. Residents may go out and return as they wish. Young Pioneers come regularly to talk with the elderly or do services for them. Trade unions give help and keep in close touch with former members. Cultural groups and famous individuals come to give performances or lectures. The Home has its own bus for excursions which are frequent. The Home is surrounded by gardens and a small park. I have never seen such a happy group of old people."

- Security and care for the elderly is but one side of the situation of this sector of the Soviet population. A social role is provided for many of those who are aged and retired. They constitute the greater number of those who serve on the residents' committees in the housing blocks or on the comradely courts that handle minor offenses and disputes on the local level. The elderly have come to play this role because of the respect that exists for experience and wisdom, a far cry from the 'generation gap' that tends to manifest itself in the most ugly forms in US or British society.

In the advanced capitalist countries, let alone former colonies, until popular struggles compelled the introduction of old age pension schemes in fairly recent decades, old age was a frightening prospect of neglect and misery. Fear of old age hung constantly over the working class. Existing pension systems have not eliminated that fear but merely modified it. For one thing throughout their working lives old people have had a slice of their wages deducted by the state to qualify them for a pension putting the shadow of old age in every pay packet.

As fixed income i.e., income not subject to regular rises as in the case of wages of workers that can be increased by struggle, pensions rapidly decline in real value as prices rise and inflation mounts. The pensioner must pay the same high rents and high cost of living generally that are borne by the working population. In Britain, pension incomes are even taxed. Struggles to obtain increases in old age pensions to match an inflated cost of living are far more difficult than workers' fights for wage increases through their trade unions. The British old age pension has been so inadequate that cases of death from malnutrition and from hypothermia (literally, exposure from lack of heated surroundings) are common for the elderly who cannot afford an adequate diet or pay the enormous cost of heating a room.

In time of economic crisis, such as that which hit the capitalist system in the 1970s, one of the targets for "economising" in the USA is "welfare state" spending, a curtailing of all forms of social security. This campaign is pursued especially by the right-wing political forces, who campaign against "government spending" as a violation of "free enterprise". The aged and retired become victims of the crisis as much as the active worker who is thrown out of his job.

As for homes for the aged, those that exist run by the state or by local governments in the US and Britain are notorious for their callous neglect or ill-treatment of residents, their inadequate nutrition or accommodation facilities, their lack of facilities to occupy the idle time. One of the repeated expressions of fear that I remember hearing in the United States is 'God, I hope I never have to go into a 'home'!' Anyone forced to enter such a home is usually compelled to surrender all savings.

and income to the institution's management. For those with sufficient savings there are costly "nursing homes" for the aged, but these, too, have frequently brought investigations for scandals of gross neglect and sheer mulcting of the helpless elderly.

Developing countries with a mainly capitalist orientation, like the Philippines, have meager social security systems that touch only a fraction of the population. The elderly are essentially the responsibility of the family, and 90 per cent of Filipino families are poor. Homes for the aged do not exist.

Socialism in the Soviet Union, however, has removed the fear of old age, and for the elderly the opportunities for culture, recreation, rest and for productive activity as well are the same as for active workers.

### GOOD HEALTH FOR FREE

It is sometimes said that it is actually doctors who run the Soviet Union, so protective is the supervision over health. Medical care and hospitalisation are completely free, with only a small nominal charge for medicines bought in a pharmacy on prescription. Free health care, in fact, is a Constitutional right (Article 42 of the Soviet Constitution).

The system continually expands and becomes more thorough, especially in the field of preventive medicine and care. It has helped raise life expectancy from an average of 44 years in 1926 to 72 years in 1976. An indication of the intensification of care is in the increase in the number of doctors from 24 per 10,000 people in 1965 to 34 per 10,000 in 1977, and in the number of hospital beds from 2 680 000 to over 3 000 000 during the 1971-1975 Five-Year Plan. There are about 900,000 doctors in the country.

As in the case of social security benefits, the Soviet people contribute nothing to the cost of medical care from their wages. All medical costs are borne by the state or by enterprises and organisations, state expenditures for health were 10.6 billion rubles in 1976. For hospitalised patients medicines are free, as they are for out-patients with tuberculosis, cancer, diabetes, rheumatism, blood diseases and some others. Medicines for purchase in a pharmacy cost on average from 10 kopecks to 2 ru-

bles, including expensive drugs for which high prices are demanded in capitalist countries

In addition to the vast number of medical treatment centres (nearly 30 000 hospitals and over 40,000 clinics and out-patient departments in 1975), the health system includes a great network of sanatoria, rest homes and holiday hotels, numbering 11,700 in 1977, nearly 3 000 of them run by the trade unions. Located in the most salubrious regions of the Soviet Union, the sanatoria frequently specialise in specific ailments and diseases and have a standard 24-day period of stay. Most of them are built and operated by the trade unions and collective farms, the majority of workers paying less than a third of the cost of their stay, workers with an exceptional production record having to pay nothing. Such is one of the admirable aspects of the Soviet way of life.

My wife and I both have had considerable personal experience with the Soviet medical and health facilities, and can testify to the great care and almost anxious attention given by doctors and medical personnel.

It is scarcely possible to banish fears about ill-health from human beings, but socialism in the Soviet Union has banished the fear of not being able to afford being sick and the fear of ruinous debt due to sickness that sits like a plague upon the people of the United States, for example. In the United States, private medicine is a part of the private enterprise system and doctors are virtually businessmen with a powerful well-financed lobby that resists the least move in the direction of socialised medicine.

Patients in the US seeing doctors for slight ailments may pay from 20 to 25 dollars for a single appointment the cost of prescribed medicine being an additional 5 to 10 dollars for a single prescription. House calls by a doctor to a bed-ridden patient at home have far higher charges. Hospitalisation fees may be over 100 dollars a day merely for a bed in a ward, plus separate charges for each stage in treatment, for X-rays, anaesthetics, surgery, and medications. A surgeon or other specialist is likely to charge thousands of dollars for an operation. A seriously ill patient requiring long hospitalisation and complicated operations often has his life savings wiped out by such an experience.

Hospitals have the practice of insisting upon knowledge of a patient's financial means before admission, and do not hesitate to refuse admission or a proper stay to those without funds, dismissal from hospital before cure or healing is not infrequent due to the patient's inability to maintain payments

A very limited government "Medicare" system has been introduced in the US after many years of struggle. Designed mainly for the elderly, it pays a portion of hospital and doctor bills, but the financial burden that remains for the patient is still great. A number of private health insurance systems exist for the general population, through which a portion of medical costs can be paid, however, those enrolled in such systems have to pay a sizeable monthly membership fee, which in the long run means that the cost of being sick is still being borne by the person's own income.

Britain is a capitalist country that boasts of having a National Health Service that is compared to socialised medicine. Put into effect in 1948 as part of the reformist and nationalisation measures of the first post-war Labour government, it began as a free medical system, including free medicines and health aids. The proponents of private enterprise, however, and their political spokesmen, have steadily whittled away both the free services and the quantity and quality of medical facilities available to the general population. Patients now have to pay a required flat sum of one pound (one ruble, 46 kopecks) for each and all prescriptions by a doctor, while medicines sold without prescription in pharmacies carry costly prices set by the big drug companies. Patients now pay, at increasingly high price scales, for all kinds of disability and health aids.

The British health service has been especially undermined by its having permitted private medical practice, hospitals and other facilities to continue. Wealthy patients are thus able to "jump the queue" for treatment by paying for it, and have drawn large numbers of the best qualified doctors away from National Health Service treatment of the lower income groups. Increasingly, doctors on the National Health register seek by devious means to persuade patients to use their 'off-hours' private practice. Right-wing political forces, arguing against 'government interference' in the nation's life, have prevented the

building of more adequate hospitals and clinics for the health service. The consequence has been long waiting lists for hospitalisation, treatment and operations, with people needing serious operations frequently having to wait for a year or more. Right-wing elements do not hesitate to claim that all these are "defects of socialised medicine" and to call for the outright abolition of the system.

For the average Filipino or his counterpart in Asia, Africa and Latin America, adequate medical care is literally beyond reach and is the privilege of the well-to-do. The number of doctors in the Philippines, to begin with, is seriously depleted by the "brain drain" process of the United States, Britain and other advanced capitalist countries luring those with professional skills from the developing countries to practice in more moneyed surroundings (acquiring skilled doctors without having to train them). The British health service is heavily staffed with the developing countries' medical personnel.

The Philippine condition was highlighted by the experience of the mother of a Filipino friend of ours, a well-to-do socialite in Manila, who fell sick in Leningrad while visiting the Soviet Union with a foreign delegation of social workers. She was hospitalised for a time. When she was discharged as cured, she asked how much she owed. Told that it was free, she was astounded. "This would have cost me thousands of pesos in the Philippines!" she said. "I can't believe it."

If a well-to-do Filipino could feel this way, how much more impressed would be the poor Filipino worker or peasant by the Soviet Union's free socialised medicine?

#### A FREE EDUCATION

Working class families in capitalist countries that want to give their children a complete education have to sacrifice to do it, setting aside a major part of their budgeted income and going without many desired things to do so. The fear of not being able to educate children, so they won't have to live like I did, weighs on young couples from the time of marriage and often even earlier.

Soviet parents do not have to worry about paying for the education of their children. Education is free, not only in the primary and secondary schools but also in universities and other institutions of higher learning.

This, too, is a right. Article 45 of the Soviet Constitution stating 'Citizens of the USSR have the right to education. This right is ensured by free provision of all forms of education, by the institution of universal, compulsory secondary education, and broad development of vocational, specialised secondary, and higher education, in which instruction is oriented toward practical activity and production, by the development of extra-mural, correspondence and evening courses, by the provision of state scholarships and grants and privileges for students, by the free issue of school text books, by the opportunity to attend a school where teaching is in the native language, and by the provision of facilities for self-education.'

Ten years of education are now general and the number going on to higher education continually increases (in 1976 there were 4,950,000 students enrolled in institutions of higher learning, of which 2,711,000 were regular daytime students, 650,000 attended night classes, and 1,589,000 were studying by correspondence). The figures, no doubt, are impressive.

If parents have any fears it is that their children do not study hard enough to qualify for university entry posts, for which there is stiff competition as masses of youth undertake to gain the maximum education.

University tuition is not only free but students are paid a monthly stipend, a system that relieves the burden on parents of paying for student needs such as meals while studying. The stipend is usually 40 rubles a month and even higher at some schools, but this is increased by 25 per cent or more for students with exceptional proficiency in studies.

At secondary vocational schools the free tuition is complemented by free clothing, shoes, board and lodging for the students. Nearly one and a half million boys and girls were in such secondary schools at the end of 1976.

In non-socialist countries education in the main is a class privilege, a situation sustained by the sheer cost of education. In the most advanced of the capitalist countries, the United

States, education and particularly higher education, is quite an expensive privilege. The cost of text books and other study materials (which are either free or priced extremely low in the Soviet Union) is a considerable burden in itself on families of low income. At university level the class education becomes pronounced since tuition, classroom fees, text books, board and lodging must be paid for, both in state-run and private institutions of higher learning. While scholarships that cover part of these costs are available in small numbers, the great majority attending universities, are from well-to-do families, a system guaranteeing that the managerial, professional, political, military and other key posts in the society remain within the capitalist classes.

Britain, despite its self-proclaimed standing as a democracy, has one of the most rigid of class-based educational systems. Its "public" (i.e., private) schools effectively bar, through cost and admission policies, all but the more affluent. These schools have the best facilities and teaching staffs. Almost all the leading figures in British life are the products of the "public" schools, and also of the costly leading private universities like Oxford and Cambridge. Education, particularly that of the best calibre, is a commodity for those who can afford it. One commentary on the system as a whole is that in 1975 there were over 2 million people in Britain who were illiterates, unable to read or write. Such are the class contrasts here!

The well-educated Filipino is also invariably from a wealthy or affluent middle-class family. A lower middle-class or a working class family of moderate income literally has to sacrifice to send its children to secondary or higher schools, a situation aggravated by the large families of many children that are common in the Philippines. My two Filipino brothers-in-law—one an agricultural advisor and the other a bank clerk, each have eight children and have had to endure hardship due to the financial strain of trying to educate their sons and daughters, each of whom has had to wait their turn, sometimes for wasted years, for enough family money to be accumulated for them to study.

The greatest percentage of Filipino children have no more than four years of school, their parents, especially in poor peasant families, withdrawing their children from study at that

point so they can work either in the fields or at other remunerative labour to put food on the table

In 1969 my wife wrote an article for a Philippine magazine about the Lumumba Friendship University in Moscow, and of its offering of free education to youth from developing countries. The Philippines at that time had no diplomatic relations with any socialist country and the anti-Soviet propaganda was still intensive in the country. Nevertheless, hundreds of applications flooded into the Lumumba University from Filipino youth who read the article, all keenly desirous of higher education but unable to afford the cost of it in their own country.

#### HOUSING WITHOUT HARDSHIP

There are no homeless people in the Soviet Union and there are no high rents. This simple statement of fact about the Soviet socialist society embodies a devastating contrast to the problem of shelter under capitalism.

Soviet people enjoy security of residence in every sense of the word. Landlords having ceased to exist since the October Revolution, either in regard to land ownership or in regard to ownership of income-earning property, there are no fears of being evicted from a home for nonpayment of rent or in order for a landlord to raise the rent for some other tenant. Cases of inability to pay rent are inconceivable since Soviet rents are the lowest in the world, averaging no more than 3 to 4 per cent of family income. This, by the way, for a family includes the cost of electricity, gas, heating and hot water.

Housing construction in the Soviet Union occurs on a scale so vast that the capitalist press abroad seeks to evade mentioning it so their readers will not make a comparison with the scandalous lack of housing in the leading capitalist nations. Between 1946 and 1974 more than 55 million new apartments or flats were built in Soviet cities, towns and countryside. During the Ninth Five-Year Plan of 1971-1975 alone 11 224 000 new flats were constructed, and 25 million people were provided with new housing or had their homes renovated for modernisation. The aim is to provide the entire population with modern utility-equipped homes in the foreseeable future. So exten-

give has the construction of housing become, and so well-developed is the capacity for providing new housing, that when the new Soviet Constitution was adopted in 1977, it included an entirely new article, Article 44, which declares

Citizens of the USSR have the right to housing. This right is ensured by the development and upkeep of state and socially-owned housing, by assistance for co-operative and individual house building, by fair distribution, under public control, of the housing that becomes available through the fulfillment of the programme of building well-appointed dwellings, and by low rents and low charges for utility services. Citizens of the USSR shall take good care of the housing allocated to them."

No capitalist country has ever set itself nor is capable of handling a task like that.

Foreigners find it hard to believe that new apartments are fully equipped with amenities for which the family moving in does not pay, nor is a down payment of any kind necessary as is usually done in the West. A flat is allocated on a permanent basis with the exception of cooperative flats. In fact there is considerable mobility of the population and arrangements for an exchanging of flats are being facilitated.

Rents differ a bit, depending on the number of rooms, their size, the number in the family, and the wages of the most highly-paid member, but the maximum rent is 13.2 kopecks per square metre of floor space (not counting kitchen, bathroom and corridor space). At the end of 1974 the average amount of housing space for a city dweller was 11.8 square metres, making an average monthly rent for a flat suitable for a family of four 7 rubles and 23 kopecks. It is noteworthy that there has been no change in rents in the Soviet Union since 1926.

Apartment blocks are also built on a cooperative basis, those participating in the venture contributing to the cost of an apartment and acquiring ownership of it. Funds may be borrowed for this purpose on a long-term, easy payment basis. By 1977 over two million families were living in 257,000 cooperative buildings. Since a shortage of new housing still exists—the re-housing of an entire country of over 260 million people is a gigantic task—those living in old houses or in apartments now inadequate due to family growth are placed on a housing list

by their local Soviet. However, they know that new housing is being built and that sooner or later they will move into comfortable modern quarters at fixed low rent, a certainty that engenders a feeling of security and of confidence in the future. New, larger and better-equipped flats are now being built to rehouse many of those who had received new flats in the earlier post-war projects.

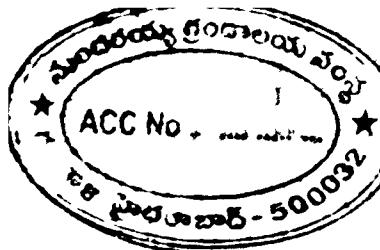
In contrast, the question of housing is a tremendous, unsolved social problem in all capitalist countries. Housing construction is mostly in the hands of private builders and real estate owners (landlords) who deliberately maintain a housing shortage in order to keep both rents and the price of buying a home at the highest possible level. Even a proportion of existing housing is kept empty or vacated for 'redevelopment' as a means of creating a more competitive market for living space, so that rows of empty dwellings may be seen while countless people literally have no homes. Government-built public housing with comparatively low rents (the lowest in Britain is 5 or 6 times higher than the most costly apartment in the Soviet Union) is restricted and successfully fought against by the powerful private landlord interests, house-building by the state diminishing to almost nothing in Britain in the mid-1970s.

Those undertaking to buy homes invariably have to borrow the money from banks or building societies which charge enormous interest rates on repayment. Interest on house purchase loans reached a staggering 12 to 14 per cent in Britain in 1975 and remained at that level. Since interest calculation is not straight but is cumulative, the repayment of the loan, or "redeeming of the mortgage" as it is termed, becomes a fantastic debt experience, the house buyer eventually spending over the years a sum that can be twice the amount of the original purchase price. Monthly mortgage instalments often devour the bulk of a workers' or middle class families' income, house buyers becoming literally "mortgage slaves." A family buying a cheap, old home for the equivalent of 12,000 rubles—a low price in 1977—may wind up eventually paying as much as 20 000 rubles in mortgage repayments. Families are still prepared to accept this to escape the burden of high rents.

The overcrowded, filthy, crumbling, rat-infested housing in

large districts of New York and the other US cities is well-known and notorious. In British cities the problem of utter homelessness is very grave. In 1977 an estimated 30 000 homeless people in London were sleeping 'rough' in parks, under bridges and in the rubble of derelict buildings. An extensive "squatters movement" has for years engaged in moving homeless families into housing deliberately kept empty by landlords. Pitched battles between police hired by the landlords and the 'illegal' tenants are common. The homeless in Britain as a whole are several times the London figures. At times homeless wives and children are given temporary dormitory-style accommodation in charity-run hostels where, however, husbands are barred from staying. The wrecking of families as a consequence has become a national scandal.

This is the way the housing problem is being tackled in the Soviet Union and in the West. The first socialist state is genuinely concerned about man, displaying thus its lofty humanism, whereas the world of capital turns the blind eye to his needs.



## *Chapter IV*

### GOOD OLD DAYS" AND MODERN TIMES

There is a common tendency among people in all capitalist countries to look back at the past with great nostalgia and to recollect the charms and glories of life as it used to be, in the 'good old days.' Some of the periods supposedly having such a good life were the 1920s and the "gay nineties," i.e., the 1890s, which are remembered as prosperous and somehow carefree. A great many people think of their youth in this way, as if another generation had it better" or had reason to be happier.

Aside from the pink haze of memory that usually softens the most unhappy of past events, there are certain hard, material reasons for such musings. Tension, insecurity and fears have always been a part of capitalist life, particularly for the working majority, and the lower living standards of the past could only have made these intense, today they are magnified by the failure of advanced technology (and the scientific and technological revolution in general) to realise under capitalism the huge hopes and expectations of the people.

"Life was simpler then," the worried, backward looking adult will say today. Prices, especially, cause nostalgia for the days when a dollar, a pound or a peso could in recollection buy ten times as much as they can in today's inflationary cost of living. People feel trapped and betrayed by the capitalist system that has merely moved the same-old insecurities and inequalities and injustices to another, more aggravated level dominated by monopoly capitalism.

In the Soviet Union it is difficult to find anyone who looks back to the 'good old days,' which, in comparison, would be

the days of Tsarism with its social injustice, inequality and exploitation. Longing for the glories of the pre-revolutionary times in Russia is limited to emigre landlords and capitalists and isolated misfits like Alexander Solzhenitsyn.

A "good old days" mentality is not to be found among Soviet people, for whom social insecurity has been banished, and for whom each planned advance is a stride away from the days of deprivation and backwardness of the past and towards the general weal flourishing science and culture and progress in all spheres of life

In a different sense, there are periods in the past 60 years, since the October Revolution, that have about them a nostalgic aura. These are the revolutionary years themselves, when Lenin, his comrades, and a militant working class overthrew capitalism, victoriously smashed counter-revolutionary invasion, and laid the basis of a socialist society, the years of the First Five-Year Plan, with its first-ever triumphs of labour and production and collective farming through mankind's planning the years of the Great Patriotic War, which aroused the human spirit to new heights in the defence of the socialist homeland. And finally, there are the accomplishments of the post-war construction

It is these periods that have an aura of noble and well-deserved glory about them Soviet people, both young and old, look back to these periods as to heroic ages and are animated by enthusiasm to uphold socialism. These feelings have been encouraged in the Soviet people by the government and the system they serve

In this context it is pertinent to deal with certain arguments current in the West.

From "New Left" circles in many capitalist countries have come charges at times that the Soviet Union and the Soviet people have lost their revolutionary spirit as their society has developed and become prosperous. When traced to their source, these charges are found to emanate chiefly from rebels of the middle class, a social grouping hit severely by such features of the contemporary capitalist crisis as inflation, high taxes and the phenomenon of the educated unemployed," and tending to seek

in a volatile manner for immediate solutions to their problems, including romanticised instant revolution. The revolutions of the moment, such as the Cuban Revolution in its enthusiastic early period, are seized upon as models of the revolutionary spirit and contrasted with an allegedly aged and staid Soviet Union, an attitude that conveniently disregards the enormous aid given by the Soviet Union to past-revolutionary Cuba and that equally disregards the deep gratitude expressed by Cuba for that aid "New Left" claims are picked up and given maximum publication in the capitalist press, to try and cause youth to adopt an anti-Soviet attitude Soviet youth in particular, it is unjustly said, do not have a revolutionary outlook, like that of their grandfathers and even fathers.

This, in a way, is another form, an ultra-left version, of the "good old days" thinking that is prevalent under capitalism It conceives of the socialist revolution only in terms of the days of October, the barricades, the storming of old ruling class citadels of power, the demonstrations in the streets, and the sharp battles with the class enemy Today's battles of construction and production, of advancing along the lines of labour from socialism towards communism, are not considered to be revolutionary The reasoning is consciously invoked to serve a particular purpose

Such a viewpoint is rooted in ignorance of the life, the atmosphere and the quality of life in the Soviet Union on the one hand and of the aims and processes of a socialist society on the other and should be dealt with in detail

#### WEAVING TOGETHER THE REVOLUTIONARY PAST AND THE REVOLUTIONARY PRESENT

The October Revolution and the accomplishments of socialism are closely associated with the Soviet people's patriotism. Their aspirations are inseparable from the interests of the country they work to glorify The words that I heard most frequently throughout the land are "Work" "Peace" and the October Revolution," at times complemented by the words "May Day" standing for the international unity of the working people These

words are a blend, as it were, of the ideals of the Soviet working people.

"Man is a friend, comrade and brother to his fellow man" is another beautiful principle underlying relations between Soviet citizens (it is only natural that comrade is the most common form of address) As I see it, these principles of Soviet life have been consciously imbibed by every person.

"Respect for the October Revolution, Lenin, its leader, and the achievements of their fathers has been constantly present in the lives of three generations. The admirable features of the Soviet people indisputably include loyalty to the people's rule, desire to build up its power, honesty in performing their duties, adherence to peace and internationalism. The heroic past has blended with the present-day accomplishments, making claims that the Soviet Union has lost its militant spirit absolutely groundless.

Here are a few incidents to prove my point

While visiting the Armed Forces Museum in Moscow I saw Marshall Budyonny A busload of Young Pioneers arrived and they instantly recognised him and swarmed to surround him, calling upon him to tell them about his exploits in the Civil War. Marshall Budyonny laughed and waved his hand, "Oh, I think I look too old to you now" he said "but there, in the museum, you'll see what I could do when I was young" "No, no," the Pioneers shouted happy to hear him talk "you are not old to us" Thus I witnessed two generations meet and obviously find a common language to speak

In the many schools that I have visited there have been school projects to link the children with the past, a thing inconceivable in the West. Each had taken an outstanding individual from the revolutionary or more recent time and were building a small museum of his or her life Teams of children were going to the person's birthplace and to the scenes of his or her exploits and were interviewing family, friends and others who might know something of their hero, and a cross-section of the time was being constructed

This linking of the past with the present, with its reverence for heroes both old and recent, has many forms. It is a con-

tinuing feature of the press and periodicals, and no literature is more popular than the memoirs of revolutionaries and of political and military leaders There is no such thing as a "retired" figure of any prominence on either a local or national level they are invariably called upon to speak to officiate or to participate in activities.

I attended an all-Union gathering in the Kremlin Palace of Congresses of youth volunteers who had participated in the opening up of the virgin lands in Kazakhstan to cultivation The speaker who most attracted my attention was a woman in a veteran's army uniform, Sofia Petrenko, who gave an address that stirred the packed auditorium of youth to stormy applause. Her speech was of her experience as a Komsomol volunteer worker in the construction of the Magnitogorsk steel plant in the early 1930s, during the First Five-Year Plan. She spoke of working indefinite working hours for months without a day off, in spartan living conditions and with complete disregard for material reward 'My wages I kept in an old box under my bed, which was a canvas cot When I was paid I just threw the money in the box I never knew what was in there Someone might have come in and taken from it, and I would never have known or cared We never thought about money, just about the plant we were building for constructing socialism ' She compared her experience with those of the youth present who had laboured with the same spirit in the virgin lands and praised them for having the same attitudes In the Great Patriotic War she was in the army, defending what she built They gave her a standing ovation

The preservation of the sense of struggle, of being engaged in a constant battle of production of assault on targets is carried on from one five-year plan to another In the Soviet Union there is never the feeling of a society at rest or marking time Every gain is a milestone on the road to greater goals The charts of growth forcefully show the closing of the gap and more frequently exceeded planned figures

The struggle for socialist construction occurs, too in the context of international struggle, not only in the contest between systems but in the international assistance given to other socialist countries and to the developing countries—proletarian interna-

tionalism and internationalist duty, both of which call for a high degree of revolutionary consciousness and commitment by the Soviet people who forego much in their own living standards to make such aid possible

Society as a whole is firmly held together by the people's moral and political cohesion and unity, with the Communist Party and the Soviet Government being the recognised and respected leaders. The country's achievements must be properly defended and the efforts taken to safeguard the homeland guarantee the security of the country and the entire socialist community

To me a remarkable thing about the Soviet Union is not so much its revolutionary birth and its commitments to revolutionary principles, but the fact that these guiding principles have been sustained through the tedious mundane, everyday routines of building a new society which is not all banners and songs. This is a phase of struggle that is not understood by the non-revolutionary or by the romantic revolutionary for whom revolution merely means seizing power. As my Soviet friend Alexei, has pointed out to me, for a revolutionary the problem really begins only after seizing power the construction of the new society is far more difficult and challenging than the overthrow of the old. Maintaining a revolutionary consciousness on the shop floor, in the fields and in the offices 60 years after coming to power is no mean feat.

It is a phenomenon that may be appreciated by long-term Communists in a capitalist or developing country where periods of sharp struggle calling for tactics of exciting confrontation may be interspersed with long stretches of routine organisational work. For every moment on a picket line or in a demonstration that may be attacked by the police there are months of printing and passing out leaflets sitting in frequently dull meetings or arguing with an individual to convince him to sign a petition. It is well known that it is a tiring business to get only a small number of worker members to attend their trade union meetings. Having for years done 'Jimmy Higgins' work in the US Communist Party (i.e., all the little 'dirty' jobs like passing out leaflets in the street addressing envelopes and sweeping out the hall after a meeting) I have felt in a position to understand the

**Soviet achievement of sustaining a high degree of militance and political consciousness**

It is sheer conviction and dedication to understood political principles that enables one to persevere in the patient, unromantic chores of a revolutionary movement I believe these are the features duplicated in the other socialist countries.

Such dedication to the cause of socialism has been encouraged in the working class and the entire people by the Party True, the state controls all the organs of information, education and persuasion but the fact has nothing to do with notorious 'totalitarianism.' More than control by the state is involved, as may be seen in the fascist and other dictatorial countries, where such control has failed to win allegiance and dedication from the working people. There are no, nor can there be, totalitarian or authoritarian methods of running the country whose people have come to power and built society on the most humane and just principles. This is the people who have a great future in store,

#### **THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE COLLECTIVE**

The key factor in Soviet society is the collective principle, which could become feasible only under socialism Cooperation, the helpfulness of one for another, the feeling of being part of a group and that one's own interests and welfare depend on developing the interest and welfare of the group have come to predominate in Soviet life The atmosphere and life in the country have greatly benefited from such attitudes.

This collective principle is active in the life of every Soviet citizen from infancy to old age—literally in the creche and when people retire.

Virtually all Soviet citizens belong to organisations, in which they actively work on a voluntary and equal basis. Public organisations in the Soviet Union have a quite different character as compared to organisations in the capitalist countries. The latter are abundant and a great many people belong to them but, aside from those that are purely social in character and are intended mainly for amusement and entertainment, they are usually formed

by special interest groups whose aims conflict with the interests of others. In one way or another they serve and uphold the interests of the monopolists. The left-wing trade unions in the US or Britain have literally to fight against other bodies like manufacturers or businessmen's associations and their political parties. People come together for protection against the predatory activities of powerful and influential monopolies. This is the characteristic of a class society that elevates the individual rather than the collective interest.

In the Soviet Union there are no groups seeking special advantages to the detriment of others. All organisations exist around the participatory idea and play a part in building socialism. Trade unions are not organisations of class struggle but are the key bodies in carrying out production and in distributing the benefits from what has been produced to the workers. There are no antagonistic classes, hence Soviet trade unions have no need to stage strikes. They are not necessary in the state of the whole people united morally and politically and this is something that the most die-hard anti-Sovieteers are unwilling to admit.

There are many forms of collective participation in the running of Soviet society. The phenomenon is highly symptomatic and invariably impresses foreigners. In neither the United States nor Britain, supposedly great democracies is there anything approaching the mass sharing in government in the Soviet Union.

The work of government in the United States and Britain, local or at the upper levels, rests on an array of paid appointive positions in the filling of which party patronage or personal acquaintance with officials figure greatly. In the Philippines this system, devised by US colonial rulers, became so riddled with corruption and nepotism that it was a factor in the imposition of an authoritarian martial law regime in 1972 that had as one of its declared aims the abatement of political corruption, a reform that was implemented by going to another extreme of suspending all elections. When they did take place however, their anti-democratic character became obvious. Government, either local or national is a remote, scarcely understood process to the vast majority of people, who are led to focus their atten-

tion on the personal charms rather than the policies of officials, and who are not encouraged to participate in something that does not pay them a substantial monetary reward. The contrast between the Soviet and foreign way of life is considerable so that they are incommensurable.

The collective principle affects the behaviour as well as the sense of responsibility in Soviet citizens. A rapport and a far freer association exists among the people than may be found in non-socialist societies. It has expression, in one way, in the use of the word "comrade" which is employed generally as a form of address, including or even particularly for strangers. In public places or on trains, planes or buses I have often noticed the quickness with which conversation shared laughter or comment made their appearance. There is no sensation of barriers between people.

The community of interest is such that it is almost inconceivable that anyone stricken or obviously in trouble in the street would not immediately bring a gathering of the helpful, a circumstance that has become practically a rarity in New York and other large capitalist cities, where people walk around or hurry away from anyone lying in the street, saying if asked why, 'I don't want to be involved' Involvement, in society and of one person with his or her fellows, is an indispensable part of socialism. I have had people run after me to return to me an item as trivial as a piece of Kleenex that I had accidentally dropped.

A British friend of mine, visiting Moscow, was wearing a pair of platform shoes. She was accosted on the street by a middle-aged Russian woman who told her 'You should take those shoes home and change them for an ordinary pair. Don't you know those are bad for your feet?' This was not an isolated case of presumption but a typical example of a Soviet citizen expressing concern for a comrade.

\* This feeling of concern for each other and for the functioning of their society has its manifestations among Soviet people also in attitudes towards what are known in the capitalist press as "dissidents." At times the international capitalist press has reported incidents in the streets of Moscow in which half a dozen pro-Zionists or opponents of Soviet policies, in an understood

arrangement with capitalist newspaper correspondents, have suddenly unfurled posters or banners in demonstrations in crowded squares and have been quickly surrounded and had their materials seized. This is invariably reported abroad as "secret police" breaking up a "democratic expression of opinion" but it is invariably a manifestation of the aroused collective feeling of ordinary citizens who look upon such a violation of the collective interest by individuals as being outside the principles of the society.

Perhaps more than any other aspect of the Soviet Union, the collective principle, in public ownership and in people's behaviour, has upset capitalism and its defenders. A vast effort to portray the collective as regimentation has always figured in anti-Soviet propaganda, as if socialism creates a mass of faceless, featureless automatons echoing sentiments programmed by pushbutton. Every defector, "dissident," or plain violator of Soviet law who becomes known to the capitalist propaganda machine is played up as a precious individual trying to free himself from the alleged straitjacket of socialism, or collectivism. There are no shackles whatsoever for honest people!

Aside from being a gross distortion of the fact that the interests of the individual advance farthest and fastest when all work together in the common interest, the capitalist emphasis on the individual is hypocritical and dishonest in the extreme. Individuality in the United States, Britain or the Philippines is recognised only when it exemplifies or points up capitalist principles. Any individual who objects to laws or practices that infringe the very rights supposedly guaranteed under these countries' Constitutions is likely to be denounced as a subversive, un-American, un-British, un-Filipino, a freak, or worse. Not mentioned is the truth that for the great majority of people under capitalism—workers, farmers, employees or intellectuals—personal welfare and interests are only protected and advanced by collective association in trade unions, federations, protest groups and other such organisations.

A good example of British "individuality" is seen in the insistence by wealthy groups on the maintenance of private beds in National Health Service hospitals, i.e., private beds privately

paid for in well-equipped wards separate from ordinary patients, served by the best doctors and consultants for high fees. It would violate the freedom of the individual and his freedom of choice if the private beds are removed, clamoured the wealthy defenders of this practice when a movement led by hospital nurses and attendants, arose in 1975 to abolish this privilege of the rich to have special treatment. Those who raised the clamour did not consider or did not care that many individuals with low incomes in need of operations or treatment, were being turned away or kept on long waiting lists because of lack of beds and hospital space, or of available doctors.

In all capitalist countries, government spending on social welfare, old age pensions, medical care, low-cost public housing education and other social needs has been achieved only through mass movements and struggles by people standing together in unity. "One man alone can do nothing, many men acting together can move mountains," is one saying by those who unite to fight the dominion of capital.

However, all such government spending is continually under attack by reactionary capitalist interests, which denounce it as "socialistic." One argument of the reactionaries is that government welfare programmes sap the individuality and the individual initiative of those who benefit from them. In the name of such contentions the Tory government in Britain in 1970 abolished free milk for primary school children that had previously been won by working class struggle.

Freedom of the individual, in capitalist terms, is nothing more than a thin disguise for the law of the jungle, every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost.

Untrammeled individual freedom is the gateway to inequality, in which the great majority of individuals are trodden upon by the few individuals who hold the levers of wealth and power.

Anti-Soviet propagandists eagerly search through information on Soviet society, trying to turn up evidence that a spark of capitalist individuality still exists. Since the cult of the individual is heavily emphasised among intellectuals in capitalist countries, to nurture in them the free enterprise quest for wealth and

financial success, the desire to prove or to create the proof that Soviet intellectuals have the same character and ambition as almost an obsession. Farmers are also presumed to be bulwarks of individualism in capitalist society, so reports that the peasant members of collective farms in the Soviet Union have private plots on which a percentage of the vegetables and fruit consumed in the country are grown produced at one time a plethora of hopeful capitalist claims that the Soviet peasant was striving desperately to get back to individual private land ownership. The sale of the produce from the small private plots (up to 1.2 acre) in 'free markets' in urban centres was also seized upon by capitalist correspondents to corroborate the assertion.

In the Moscow central free market, where farmers from as far away as Georgia and Armenia can bring produce from their private plots and sell it at their own prices, my wife and I once saw a display of garlic, which we like very much. The peasant woman behind the counter was asking a very high price for it. My wife looked at it with longing but indicated that the price was exorbitant. The woman turned to a Russian companion of ours and asked, "Where does she come from?" When she was told the Philippines, the peasant woman took a large handful of garlic and gave it to my wife, free. This was no 'free enterprise' impulse but was part of a friendly, communal generosity that characterises people raised in the collective atmosphere of the Soviet Union, an atmosphere that permeates Soviet life as its predominant influence. And there is nothing the anti-Sovieteers can do about it.

Another sector of the Soviet economy that has often been seized upon by its detractors as a breeding source of the free enterprise individual is that of the repairmen of everything from shoes to refrigerators.

In 1970 I visited a relatively new industrial building in the city of Kiev, the Remtochmechanika. I was brought there by the secretary of the organisational committee of the Ukrainian Republic's Union of Local Industries and Services, one of the 25 branch trade unions in the Soviet Union. He wanted to show me a new venture involving members of his union.

Remtochmechanika is a factory engaged in general repair work—of typewriters, cameras, watches, and all types of household appliances and equipment. It had brought together 750 of the small shopkeeper-workers who had formerly operated in small premises, most of them on their own. The foreign visitor is perhaps not aware that the small shops of this type (as well as individuals who take photographs in the street and similar workers) are not private enterprises but are all connected with state organisations or agencies. Any idea that such workers on their own tend to develop desires of being capitalist entrepreneurs was demolished by the talks I had with the workers in Remtochmechanika.

One and all expressed satisfaction with the new arrangement, in which they experienced collective labour in factory departments well-equipped with machinery, tools and other facilities which they could not have been provided with on their own, in which they could do a greater amount of work, and that enabled them to have a higher income. Besides the repair work that came and was apportioned through central channels, they were allowed to do extra work of their own for additional income, using the factory equipment. Thus many of the workers were using their skills to make bits of jewelry and household art-craft out of scrap metal.

Improved working conditions, facilities, comradeship and income were not the only benefits of the collective plant in this large establishment the workers, once on their own, now had cultural opportunities provided from the industry's profit funds. They have a good club where films are regularly shown, a library and sports grounds at their disposal. The trade union sees to it that the workers have opportunities for going to sanatoria and holiday hotels free or at a discount or for sending their children to camps.

Such things, which are usual and taken for granted by the Soviet working people, are beyond the reach of their counterparts abroad.

Cases like this are reaffirmations of the great truth of the collective way of life, that the interests and the well-being of the individual flourish best in the collective, which is able

**to raise the levels and standards of living higher for all to share**

The lofty moral principle—one for all and all for one—is quite productive in the Soviet system, which counters division, alienation and individualism of the capitalist world with comradeship and collectivism as instruments of cultivating the communist ideals

## *Chapter V*

### ON SOCIALIST AND BOURGEOIS DEMOCRACY

From the time when I first began to understand and to defend the October Revolution and the construction of socialism in the Soviet Union, I have been stirred by the idea of using working class power to repel counter-revolution, to purge the new society of the harmful remnants of the past, and to enable new socialist generations to develop in secure conditions. I have admired the firm manner with which the Soviet working people have dealt with their enemies both internal and external, in order that the socialist system would survive.

Anti-Soviet propaganda has always tried to distort the meaning of the dictatorship of the proletariat, which has been caricatured as a denial of democracy and of human rights. This has never been the nature or substance of the dictatorship of the proletariat, which has had a liberating mission, carrying out the large humanistic aims of completely freeing the vast majority of the working people from exploitation by a privileged minority of capitalists and landlords.

At the outset of Soviet power this minority, with the aid of foreign imperialist allies, tried in every ruthless way to crush the new state of workers and peasants. There was no alternative in those circumstances but to employ the dictatorship of the proletariat as a forcible state instrument against the counter-revolution of the overthrown classes.

Also, for some time after the Civil War, while the process of eliminating the old class structure was occurring, the industrial working class was given special privileges in the form of representation and authority in order to put socialisation measures

into effect Such measures were embodied in the Soviet Constitution of 1924

This, however, was never intended to be more than temporary, as Lenin pointed out The dictatorship of the proletariat during the first decade and a half of Soviet power was actually used to create the conditions for full-fledged socialist democracy and to put it into effect. In 1936, following nationwide discussions, a new socialist Constitution was adopted that gave full and equal rights to every Soviet citizen. The exploiting classes had by then as classes completely disappeared

The Soviet Union today has turned into a state of the whole people. In all aspects of the society the broadest forms of democracy exist and continually develop The process did not take place smoothly or without aberrations, the worst of which was the suspension and disruption of socialist legality brought about by the cult of Stalin's personality This violation of socialist democracy has by no means changed the nature of the Soviet social system

Many deliberate and vicious lies have been written in the West about the phenomenon of 'Stalinism' The slanderers were tempted to square the circle by claiming that the disruption of socialist legality during the personality cult was characteristic of the totalitarian' Soviet system and inherent in its authoritarian rule. Reality has given the lie to this intentional slander

The Party courageously and publicly exposed the cult of Stalin's personality and its harmful effects on socialism. The 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956 affirmed the Leninist line for improving socialist democracy Society proved to be essentially healthy so that the elimination of 'Stalinism' only strengthened its viability

Anti-Soviet propaganda in the capitalist countries has persistently tried to create the impression that 'Stalinism' still prevails in the Soviet Union and that the country is still autocratic and totalitarian. All this is far from being true

Visitors who have been able to see the splendid modern Soviet cities, with their vast new housing districts and gleaming shopping centres, the obvious signs of prosperity and material well-being the very evident scientific achievements, technological growth and rich cultural life, can no longer be misled so

easily about the expanding socialist way of life and Soviet standard of living Instead the propaganda emphasis is placed on matters that are not readily obvious to the eye of the short-term visitor, matters like "freedom" and "human rights"

To an increasing extent people in the US, Britain and other capitalist countries are told that a socialist society is not free or democratic "What you might see is only the surface of things," goes the daily dose of misinformation 'The dictatorship of the proletariat rules the lives of the people Everybody is regimented. Everything belongs to the state Nobody has any rights The state tells everybody what to do, and nobody can disagree without being sent to Siberia" Such are the hackneyed anti-Communist statements.

The average Soviet citizen will find it hard to believe that such things are told seriously to people in this day and age, but that is because he has not grown up in a capitalist country with this theme endlessly presented to him, in the daily press over the radio, on the television screen, and in the speeches of politicians, businessmen, right-wing trade union leaders, and prominent well-to-do figures in many fields

Ceaselessly the people of capitalist countries have been told that they, but not "Russians," are free men, that they, but not "Russians," enjoy free speech, that they, and not "Russians," have free elections, a free press and a free choice of where to work, where to live, what religious belief if any to practise, where to travel, and what to do in general Especially they are told that they live in the "free world," to which almost every part of the globe should belong

#### THE "FREE WORLD" DECEPTION

In my youth in the United States I never heard the term "free world" It was not invented until many countries besides the Soviet Union became socialist after the war against fascism, and until national liberation began to put an end to colonialism and imperialist rule in many other countries With the handwriting on the wall for the outmoded capitalist way of life, the "free world" was concocted as a kind of brainwashing term, to convince people that they were better off under capitalism It was used with a desperate obsession In the United States in

particular nothing is used so freely as the word "free." The word was attached to everything in the "cold war" period, obsessional- ly US troops massacred entire villages of old people and children in Korea and in Vietnam to preserve the 'free world '

People living under capitalism are expected to find it comforting or reassuring to be told that they live in the "free world" and that they have all the democratic rights that are alleged to go with it. However, the fact is that most people have a general awareness that forces exist in the society all around them before which they are helpless and in the face of which their "rights" mean nothing Below the surface of what the propaganda tells them to think, the belief is very widespread that things are not as free as they are told they are. The common people in the US, Britain or the Philippines are aware that they have no say about what appears in the press or on the radio and television, that the ways in which they can voice their opinions are limited and that 'some things are better not discussed,' that they have really had nothing to do about selecting the candidates for public office for whom they are asked to vote, that their choice of a job is subject to the desires of a private employer who can hire and fire them at will that the choice of where to live is restricted by one's income and by such factors as the colour of one's skin, that a religious belief can lead to severe discrimination and persecution, and that there are great risks in choosing to associate with particular groups or organisations They realise that when it comes right down to it, it is the rich man, the big boss, the powers that be, that can speak louder, swing the votes in any election, buy up everything in sight, make the important decisions, issue the orders, and lay down the line, or the law The average, ordinary person knows that whatever rights or freedoms he or she may have are not equal by far, and are made to give way, to those enjoyed by the rich and the powerful The crux of the matter is that socially they are poles apart

Of course the greatest test of freedom in the 'free world' comes for those who criticise, oppose or seek to change for the better the system or any of its features. It is quickly made evident then that free speech free press, free elections and the rest of it are not free for such people They are outcasts, unwanted by society

In the "free world" scores of countries forbid a legal existence to the Communist Party or to other left-wing organisations, the members of which risk death or long imprisonment, and the activity of such organisations and their members is severely restricted in such major bastions of capitalist democracy as the United States and the Federal Republic of Germany

The "free world" embraces a host of military dictatorships, semi-colonies, the apartheid state of South Africa, fascist states, and the general condition in all capitalist countries is that of sharp class struggle racial conflict and widespread social tension As practised concepts, democracy and freedom in the "free world" are nowhere to be found in the forms that capitalism itself professes to uphold

In a very real sense the anti-Soviet propaganda that denies the existence of freedom and democracy in the Soviet Union is circulated precisely because the violations of human rights are so general in the capitalist countries Thus the human rights that citizens enjoy in the Soviet Union according to their Constitution are distorted and falsified in the propaganda largely because these human rights either do not exist or are continually breached in the capitalist countries It is a way of preventing people from making an honest comparison

The impression conveyed by this kind of anti-Soviet propaganda is that "human rights" in the Soviet Union have to do almost wholly with the right of a tiny number of individual "dissidents" to say and publish what they want, and to oppose actively the socialist system in open coordination with imperialist agencies to the point of violating its laws with impunity The only "human right" the capitalist countries uphold for Soviet citizens is the "right" to work against and to help destroy the socialist system

#### A "FREE WORLD" CASE HISTORY

My own attitudes towards this particular anti-Soviet campaign have been shaped in large part by personal experience with the ways in which such rights are observed in the "free world" My wife and I "dissented" with the neo-colonial government that

US imperialism fostered in the Philippines in the late 1940s and the 1950s, and we carried this to the extent of participating in a mass-supported armed struggle for democratic change. It was a struggle conducted by Filipino peasant and worker masses whose human rights had been ruthlessly obliterated so that US businessmen and military bases could operate unrestrictedly. We had no illusions about the consequences of our acts, and when we were captured in battle by government troops in 1952 we did not really expect to be treated leniently.

However, we did expect to be tried and sentenced under the law but this was not done. Philippine laws provide a maximum penalty of 12 years in prison for rebellion. The prosecution and the courts, serving a vengeful "dictatorship of the bourgeoisie," invented a crime that was not to be found on the statute books, "rebellion complexed with murder, arson, robbery and kidnapping." Under this charge, which was a crude distortion of the character of the revolutionary struggle in which we were engaged we and innumerable comrades of ours were sentenced to imprisonment for life, and many received the death penalty. Although the Philippine Supreme Court, years later, eventually ruled that the charge was illegal as were the sentences, it did nothing to alter our sentences. My wife and I managed to win our release through pardon after ten years of incarceration but only due to an international protest campaign in our support. Many of our Filipino comrades remained in prison for 20 years under the illegal charge.

Human rights for my wife and myself were not restored with our release. I was deported from the Philippines to the United States but my wife was not allowed to accompany me as a Filipino she was forbidden to enter the United States because of her "dissidence." The US embassy officials in the Philippines informed her that she could never travel to the United States, unless for a period of at least five years she demonstrated by specific acts that she had renounced her beliefs and had actively worked against her comrades, i.e., proved by deeds that she had become a renegade. It was made plain to us that we could have our human right to live together as man and wife if we abandoned our convictions and debased ourselves morally. Thus we refused to do.

Forbidden to live together in each other's countries, my wife and I decided to go to a third country to live. This, too, was denied us. After ten years of separation in prison, we were kept apart for another year and a half while we struggled to be together in our marriage. We had to appeal for an international campaign of pressure to compel the Philippine government to permit my wife to be with me. This was finally successful, but we had to become exiles in order to live together. Since then we have lived in the always precarious conditions of exiles in England, for 14 years watching from afar the events in the Philippines and United States where we cannot freely go with each other.

My wife and I are well aware that our own experiences are minor in comparison with the massive denial or frustration of human rights for black, Indian, Chicano Puerto Rican and other peoples in the United States, for the overwhelming black majority in South Africa that is kept in apartheid slavery, for the Roman Catholic minority in British Northern Ireland, or for innumerable other groups and individuals in the capitalist part of the world. No honest or perceptive person can live in the 'free world' where these things occur without concluding that the "human rights" propaganda directed at the Soviet Union is an exercise in massive hypocrisy.

However, when we have visited the Soviet Union we have found ourselves honoured and respected for our years in struggle and in prison for our efforts to win the substance of freedom for workers and peasants in the Philippines and in other countries. One of the features of socialist democracy that has impressed us and made us realise its profoundly humane nature is that all fighters for democracy are welcome in the Soviet Union.

#### SOCIALIST DEMOCRACY AND DISSIDENCE

The enjoyment of freedoms and rights in a socialist society is inseparable from the collective way of life. There is no obligation for an individual to belong to any public organisation but it is impossible for anyone to live in the Soviet Union without enjoying or benefiting from the collective aspects or products.

Individuals in a collective society are required to "conform" only in the sense that they are discouraged from having special privileges, from behaving in an anti-social way that injures the interests of others, or from rejecting the duties of citizenship.

Thus in Article 39 of the Soviet Constitution, which guarantees that Soviet citizens "enjoy in full the social, economic, political, and personal rights and freedoms proclaimed and guaranteed by the Constitution of the USSR and by Soviet laws," it is also stated that "Enjoyment by citizens of their rights and freedoms must not be to the detriment of the interests of society or the state, or infringe the rights of other citizens."

This is not at all a matter of suffocating the individual or his being overly subordinated to a collective outlook as opponents of Soviet power would like to picture it. It is putting into practice the wholly valid concept that an individual flourishes best and is best served in collective endeavor that advances the interests and well-being of everyone.

What, then, about the individual 'dissidents' who are the object of so much pretended concern in capitalist circles? Are the rights of "dissidents" in the Soviet Union being violated, and what rights should they have?

I am one of those who are considered 'dissidents' in capitalist society. As a revolutionary and a participant in movements of social protest, however, I have always been motivated by the conviction and consciousness that my beliefs and actions coincide with the interests of the vast majority of the people. The socialist ideas that I work toward are designed to serve the interests of the entire people. The idea of obtaining the greatest good for the greatest number of people is certainly a central theme of social progress. Fighting for socialism and then building socialism are to me essential for social progress.

Forces or individuals that try to stop this process or to go against it either harm the interests of this vast majority of people or become anachronistic misfits in the new, developing society. Imperialism's anti-Soviet propagandists have built their "human rights" campaign around a very few individuals in the Soviet Union who oppose socialism and who try to organise groups in opposition to the principles of socialist society. These individ-

uals do not merely agitate among themselves but establish ties with imperialist agencies and organisations that are solely motivated by the aim of destroying socialism. It is impossible to dissociate "dissidence" in the Soviet Union from imperialist anti-Soviet activities.

The hullabaloo raised by the US influential interest groups "in defence of human rights" in the Soviet Union pursues the aims which have nothing to do with genuine concern for the working people. The Soviet Union is being vituperated in order to distract the public attention from flagrant lawlessness perpetrated in the United States and the entire capitalist world. For this reason the situation regarding human rights in a capitalist democracy bears no relation to the situation regarding human rights in a socialist democracy.

An impression has been created that the "dissidents" in the Soviet Union are merely seeking certain 'liberalisation' in general and allegedly broader rights. But this is not so. The true nature of the "dissidents" who are made heroes of the anti-Soviet agencies is made plain when they emigrate to the West. They do not associate themselves with pro-socialist, progressive or even liberal movements in capitalist countries, but immediately run to the arms of the most right-wing elements and eagerly permit themselves to be utilised for anti-Soviet slander. This shows that the "dissidents" are hypocritical and once in emigration forget all about "human rights."

Progressive people who had been misled for years about the character of Alexander Solzhenitsyn were startled and repelled after his expulsion from the Soviet Union to hear him extoll on BBC television the glories of tsarism and yearn for its return. Others who had had their sympathy aroused by the imperialist campaign for Vladimir Bukovsky were appalled when he arrived in Britain and proclaimed that his desire was not to improve socialist democracy but to overthrow the Soviet system and they were further dismayed when Bukovsky associated himself not with liberal people but with right-wing Tory Party leaders and organisations connected with the CIA.

Revolutionary leaders of mass movements for democratic change in capitalist countries cannot in any way be compared with these few scattered malcontents under socialism who want

to revert to capitalist practices. Individuals like these are actually an extremely tiny minority in the Soviet Union, a drop in the ocean. The few dissidents of today have no class base or social base, and it is this that makes them isolated individuals.

As a revolutionary working for socialism, I could not concede revolutionary rights to enemies of socialism in the new society that is being built, nor do the Soviet state, its leaders and the overwhelming majority of its people concede that such individuals have the right to try to turn the clock back or to disrupt the socialist construction that is under way. Any leniency to enemies of socialism is out of the question because it is against the interests of the vast majority and against the principles of Marxism-Leninism as regards democracy.

Leonid Brezhnev had this to say about the Soviet Union's determination to uphold the socialist concept of democracy in his report to the 25th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union on February 24, 1976:

'Let us recall Lenin's idea that everything is moral in our society that serves the interests of communist construction. Similarly, we can say that for us the democratic is that which serves the people's interests, the interests of communist construction. We reject everything that runs counter to these interests and no one can persuade us that this is the wrong approach. We know exactly where we are going as we improve our political system. We are fully convinced that the course we have chosen is the right one.'

'Today, we know not only from theory but also from long years of practice that genuine democracy is impossible without socialism, and that socialism is impossible without a steady development of democracy. We see the improvement of our socialist democracy as consisting above all in a steady effort to ensure ever fuller participation by the working people in the running of all the affairs of society, in further developing the democratic principles of our state system, and in creating the conditions for the all-round flourishing of the individual.'

› This statement is indeed pithy and to the point.

## SOCIALIST ELECTIONS, PEOPLE'S GOVERNMENT

This collective democracy of participation has one of its best demonstrations in an area where anti-Soviet propaganda has concentrated one of its most distorting attacks the political and administrative system and elections to bodies of government. Capitalist democracy is made allegedly synonymous with "free elections" and with multi-party systems, and it is said that the Soviet Union cannot have "free elections" or democracy because it has only one political party

Such an argument could impress only those people in capitalist countries who have a limited knowledge of how their own system operates. Invariably the parties with effective power, able to form and alternate in government, must be those dedicated to upholding or to working within the capitalist system. Parties calling for radical change in the system, or for socialism, are either heavily restricted or prevented from operating. If such parties become strong enough to win majority support in a capitalist "free election," the consequences may be seen in the grim record of what happened to the Allende government in Chile or in the CIA-directed overthrow of the elected government of Cheddi Jagan's People's Progressive Party in Guyana.

I have had a variety of experiences with the capitalist electoral processes of the "free world." I recall well the arduous and dangerous procedure of trying to get the Communist Party of the United States on the ballot so that people could merely have the opportunity of voting for its candidates. The law in each of the 50 US states requires "third parties" (i.e., any party outside of the two dominant parties of big business, Democratic and Republican) to obtain many thousands of signatures of registered voters on petitions before they can appear on the ballot, the number varies, from a few thousands in some states to California's 125,000.

I lived in New York State, where a large number of signatures had to be obtained from each county, some of which are very sparsely populated by conservative farmers. I remember the exhausting process, travelling great distances, knocking on countless doors. Invariably right-wing groups mobilise gangs to attack petitioners, prevent them from speaking to people, cause

them to be arrested. People who do sign petitions are intimidated and threatened, often forcibly compelled to rescind signatures. No police officer ever made a move to protect our right to canvass for signatures, on the contrary, they would arrest us for imaginary offenses if they saw us, or order us to leave the town we were in. I remember having to go back to places where people had signed petitions and had been forced to cancel their signature under threat, remember their frightened eyes when we asked them to uphold their rights by restoring their signatures or by signing affidavits about being forced to remove them, remember the way they would peer anxiously from windows to see if the right-wing gangs were in the street outside.

During the "cold war" years, American Communists were forbidden to run candidates for office at all, were driven from their jobs, were blacklisted in their professions, and were denied passports for travelling out of the country, those in leadership posts were sent to prison for many years. This was the peak of the notorious "witch hunt".

In 1976, when detente had somewhat cleared the "cold war" climate, the Communist Party of the United States participated in that year's presidential election and collected over half a million signatures on petitions to enable the Party candidates for president and vice-president, Gus Hall and Jarvis Tyner, to be on the ballot in various states. In many states the petitions were arbitrarily thrown into the waste-baskets by reactionary election boards, or thousands of signatures were stricken off petitions for no reason, to reduce the total below the required number. The Communist Party got on the ballot in only 19 out of 50 states. Many of the votes actually cast for Gus Hall and Jarvis Tyner were not counted and not reported.

Even when on the ballot, the Communist Party or any third party, is at a gross disadvantage because the dominant capitalist media blot out news of their campaign while the capitalist parties have vast resources for publicity, provided by the big corporations. President Jimmy Carter, who won the 1976 election on the Democratic ticket, admittedly spent at least 22.5 million dollars provided by big capital to do so.

Once in office, the elected representatives of capitalist parties pay minimal heed to the ordinary people who voted for them.

despite their election pledges. US legislative bodies at federal or state or local level, it is well known, operate on what is called the 'lobby' system in which pressure groups of businessmen or big corporations determine what policies or laws are adopted. Increasingly the representatives themselves, from president down through the ranks of congress, are themselves wealthy businessmen or are from the array of legal firms, advertising agencies or other auxiliary bodies that serve capitalist enterprises. There are no workers to be found in the US Congress.

In Britain, where the Labour Party that is linked with the trade union movement has alternated in government with the openly big business Tory Party, a glaring situation exists in which Labour governments have upheld the capitalist system to the detriment of the workers' interests it is supposed to defend. Labour governments have ignored basic features of programmes on which they were elected, especially those that have promised to carry out socialist-inclined policies, have refused to heed progressive resolutions and demands adopted by the Labour Party membership itself or by trade union conferences, and have been accused of betraying the working class by those who have voted Labour. When an analysis is made of British members of parliament and of party leaders, both Labour and Tory, this situation may be understood, because it is rare to find a worker or anyone capable of upholding the interests of the working people among them.

The Philippine political system and government have had far less of 'grass root' democracy. Legislative and executive branches have never had a worker or peasant sitting in them, and have been made up overwhelmingly of landlords, businessmen and prosperous lawyers. Founded in 1930, the Communist Party has known only half a dozen years of precarious semi-legal status, the remainder spent under brutal suppression. When a number of Communists and anti-imperialist congressmen were elected in 1946 just after the anti-fascist war, they were immediately arbitrarily ousted from office before they could take seats so they couldn't vote against neo-colonial measures desired by US monopolies, an action that precipitated the armed struggle in which my wife and I participated.

In 1972 in the Philippines a martial law proclamation eliminated even the existing capitalist democratic processes, forbidding political parties of any kind to operate. Although the martial law government introduced beneficial reforms to aid national development, reforms that the Communist Party supported, these were carried out by presidential decree and did not involve the people in their implementation.

Nowhere in the capitalist part of the world is there a country with the working people participating in running all the affairs of society. Only in the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries is such a phenomenon to be found.

I observed an election in the Soviet Union in 1967. There was none of the circus-like campaign atmosphere that characterises elections in the United States, Britain or the Philippines, where extravagant promises, charges and counter-charges, name-calling, mud-slinging, and high-powered, slick, costly advertising gimmicks are featured. It takes such methods to overcome voter apathy and cynicism which have steadily increased toward the capitalist political parties. In 1976 only a little more than half of voters in the US bothered to go to the polls in a presidential election, while in most large capitalist countries in the contemporary period a situation almost of ungovernability has developed because no capitalist party is able to attract sufficient trust or support to secure a decisive majority in parliament.

Soviet elections, in contrast, are not struggles between parties or groups of business interests fighting to get into power so the instruments of government can be used to further their private purposes of gain. They are better described as processes to enable rotating sets of administrators or managers to occupy positions of responsibility. Elections are not matters of partisan political struggle. In some socialist countries, for special historical reasons, other small parties exist, but they join with the Communists in unified support for programmes of socialist construction, usually these parties form a common front with the Communists in elections, although candidates may also be non-Party.

In the Soviet Union single candidates are put forward to be voted upon for each office. Those in capitalist countries whose ideas of elections are shaped by the deceptive choice of the

bourgeois electoral processes may wonder how democracy operates in the Soviet system A choice really does occur but it comes in the selection of the candidate, which is done in general meetings in election districts, where various people's organisations put forward their selections and they are voted upon The candidate may be a Communist or he or she may not be, the selection is made on the basis of capability and recognised leadership in work and public affairs.

The election campaign that follows is not a matter of out-shouting or out-promising a rival It is an interplay between candidate and people in a series of meetings in factories or institutions, during which the candidate is presented with the people's wishes or demands. These go to make up the "mandate" that he is obliged to carry out while in office

People's collectives and organisations oversee and direct every facet of an election Every district has its election commission, with all of its members being elected All of its expenses and those of the candidates are paid for by the state, no private funds, so influential in election "races" in the capitalist countries, are employed to influence elections The commission sets up and staffs precincts, lists and keeps informed all eligible voters, prints ballots, provides information material on rights, duties, candidates and mandates, sets up polling places and equips them, receives and investigates complaints concerning the election, counts and records ballot results. The state provides the funds, buildings, paper and printing equipment, but there is popular control of the elections themselves.

Election day itself is quite unlike its counterpart in the United States or any other capitalist country It is a public holiday with all the atmosphere of a festive occasion In Moscow where I observed an election the streets were gaily decorated with bunting and banners. There were bands playing and pleasant music coming from everywhere People were out on the streets in their best clothes, fathers with children, young couples and retired elderly people Everyone, for the most part in the morning, went to the polling places, to vote These were tastefully decorated with potted plants and pictures on the walls Voters could mark their ballots in the open or enter a screened booth to do so, where there was a chair and a neatly covered table.

No clusters of "party workers" hung around in the street near the polling place to influence the voters, as is customary in capitalist elections

The reports of 99.9 per cent of the electorate casting their ballots across the whole Soviet Union are not manufactured results nor do they indicate a regimented vote. Very simply, the Soviet people take a deep interest in elections, in their candidates, and in the mandate they give, and they have a deep sense of the rights, duties and responsibilities of citizens. If they don't have faith in the candidate, they vote "no", and it often happens that a candidate is rejected through not receiving a majority of the votes. In the 1973 election to local Soviets 80 candidates were rejected in this way. Furthermore, voters have the right of recall, and they exercise it in cases where the elected deputy does not fulfill his mandate or does not report back to the people regularly as he is required to do or make an accounting of how he is serving them. In some cases deputies may be recalled before their term expires, 4,000 deputies to the Soviets of all levels have been recalled in the last ten years, with worthier candidates elected in their stead.

A woman friend of mine who was elected to a term on the Moscow city Soviet told me of the heavy responsibility of a deputy, who is continually called upon by the people with a multitude of problems, requests, grievances and demands.

A deputy at whatever level, from the local Soviet to the Supreme Soviet, receives no extra pay in the elected post but continues working at his or her regular job at the same pay, even when given leave from the regular job to conduct work in a Soviet commission, it is the usual pay for regular job that is received. Deputies in the Soviet Union are not enmeshed in corruptions such as those in capitalist politics, where office holders are very frequently enriched by the briberies, kickbacks and business opportunities made available by private contractors and vested interests. Penalties are very severe for any Soviet deputy or official who engages in corruption or misuses public property and funds.

In his address made on the occasion of the adoption of the new Soviet Constitution in 1977, Leonid Brezhnev pointed to

the increasingly strict responsibilities of Soviet deputies to the people who elect them

"The working people's demands on those whom they elect as their representatives have become stricter. It is well known that the voters' right to recall their deputy is an important element in our democracy. In the past ten years about 4,000 deputies who, in one way or another, had not justified the trust of their constituency, were recalled from Soviets at various levels, including the Supreme Soviet. So this democratic right is not merely proclaimed, but carried out in practice and serves as a good means of raising deputies' sense of responsibility for their activities."

As of June 1 1975 there were over two million deputies serving in 50 437 local Soviets in the Soviet Union. This indicates the extent of democratic representation, but the social composition of the Soviets is a more striking gauge of the nature of these popular organs of people's power. 896 180 of the 1975 deputies were workers (40.5 per cent), 601,867 were collective farmers (26.2 per cent), 712,885 were office workers, technicians, intellectuals (32.3 per cent), pensioners, army men and students made up the rest.

Soviet participatory democracy is far broader than this elected aspect of the administrative system indicates, and this is something not to be seen in any of the capitalist countries. Every Soviet sets up a large number of commissions which enroll voluntary assistants, including specialists in the various production and economic areas. In January 1975 there were over 2 500 000 assistants involved on a voluntary basis in the carrying out of the commission work.

Commissions, varying in different localities and districts, embraced planning and the budget, credentials, socialist law and protection of public order, industry, transport and communications, agriculture, education and culture, housing, pensions, juveniles' affairs, public health, sanitation, roads and bridges, street greenery, parks, water mains, guardianship of orphans and other responsibilities. As we see, the Soviets take care of a wide range of problems.

"Supervision is also given to other features of public participation, such as the public order units called "druzhnniki" and

the "comradely courts" that take care of minor offenses Inclusive of all forms of participation, by individuals and by public organisations, in the work of administration on a voluntary, unpaid basis, at least 25,000,000 Soviet citizens are involved in the operation of Soviets at any given time

### THE PEOPLE AND PUBLIC ORDER

Collective, participatory democracy in the Soviet Union is continually expanding Functions once handled by government agencies are increasingly turned over to the public organisations for administration. Among activities and institutions affected in recent years are sports, health resorts, cinemas, libraries, educational establishments Trade unions and cooperatives have taken over many functions that have to do with labour relations and wage questions (managers of enterprises, for instance, can now be fined by trade union inspectors for violating labour laws)

This process of turning administrative matters over to the people has one of its most interesting features in certain matters of justice and public order To a growing extent, the behaviour of citizens is now looked after by informal bodies like the "comradely courts" and volunteer people's militia Their activity is part of an obligation for citizens, embodied in Article 65 of the Soviet Constitution, 'to be uncompromising toward anti-social behaviour, and to help maintain public order"

The operation of the "comradely courts" in factories, in big housing units and in neighbourhoods has put part of the process of justice in the hands of the people and acts as a deterrent to serious misbehaviour These extra-judicial bodies of a voluntary character play an educational and disciplinary role rather than a penalising one They handle minor acts of social disorder in neighbourhoods this may include quarrelsomeness, abusiveness, drunkenness or petty acts of destructiveness, in factories questions of work discipline and responsibility may be referred to such "courts."

While I was in the Soviet Union in December 1966 I noted that a plenary session of the Supreme Court of the USSR had discussed the implementation of measures to eradicate crime and had drawn attention to the underestimation by some judges of

the role of the public in reeducating and correcting persons who had committed small crimes. Judges were told to give more co-operation and encouragement to the "comradely courts" and to devote more attention to the work of preventing crimes, to extending contacts with public organisations, with the heads and employees of enterprises, construction projects, establishments, state farms and collective farms.

No capitalist country can be credited with such a high consciousness and active participation of the man in the street in public affairs.

"In the Kuibyshev district of Moscow I have visited the headquarters of one of public order units known as 'volunteer people's militia or druzhina.' Set up by a decision of the Supreme Soviet in 1959, these units have become centres of the working people's participation in maintaining law and order

Four people were on duty in the little headquarters room to supervise patrols of 'druzhiniki' that went in pairs to the railroad and Metro stations, to nearby Sokolniki Park, to shopping centres and along neighbourhood streets. One of those on duty was a woman worker who was the Party secretary in a local candy factory, another was a middle-aged man who was an engineer in the metalworking plant, a third was elderly and retired on a pension, and the fourth was a young member of the Komsomol.

"Our work is independent of the regular militia," the elderly man told me, "but we cooperate with them. What we do is keep an eye on people's behaviour, especially in public places and in the streets. We try to intercept anyone who might be offensive to others. Such offenses might be very small in your opinion, like cursing or insulting someone in the street, or being drunk and disorderly, or not paying the fare on a bus — It is remarkable that in buses in Moscow and other cities people buy their own tickets on the honour system, another example of admirable consciousness the "civilised" West can only envy — but we can also intercept criminal acts, and sometimes prevent them. Actually we do not have the right of arrest, but we can escort offenders to the militia or report them. Our major role is educational and preventive. We find that in

most cases our mere accosting of offenders has a beneficial result."

The woman worker from the candy factory explained another feature of the volunteer work. In all factories we also have our volunteer units. They watch out for cases of drunkenness or for quarrels that might entail a breach of labour discipline. When there are workers' social affairs the 'druzhinniki' take an extra responsibility in case of misbehaviour that interferes with the enjoyment of others. Offenders of that kind are reported to the trade union or to the place of residence, and if the case is serious enough a comradely court might be held to establish guilt or fault and to recommend some kind of educational supervision to correct the misbehaviour." All this seemed to be a preventive measure to intercept criminal acts and was applied to one's own fellows. Nothing of the kind is possible in the capitalist countries, where the social structure is different and everybody is left to one's own devices.

With their distinctive red armbands that bear the word 'Druzhinnik' these volunteer patrols may be seen everywhere in the Soviet Union in the evening, ordinary people without uniform, assuring that hooliganism or other anti-social behaviour does not occur or get out of hand in their society.

Foreign newsmen assigned to look for incidents that can be given an anti-Soviet twist sometimes write stories about 'plain-clothes KGB agents' whom they have seen intervening against erring citizens. This is sheer nonsense, whereas it might be reasonable for capitalist countries to borrow certain rational elements of preventing crimes with the help of the public. These may come in handy in the West, with its large-scale organised crime. The capitalist system is by rights called "society of fear".

#### THE COMMUNISTS IN THE LEAD

Much of the ignorance or misunderstanding about democracy in the Soviet Union that is prevalent in capitalist countries has come from the malicious anti-Soviet propaganda about the Communist Party. The most vicious attacks are levelled at its role in socialist society and at the Communists themselves.

The bourgeoisie and its advocates have always victimised the Communists, especially those in the Soviet Union. They are portrayed by anti-Sovietists in all countries as evil and inhuman people. This grotesque caricature is being increasingly implanted in the public mind. In reality Communists, Soviet Communists first and foremost, lead the struggle for a new, more humane and more democratic world.

At the time of the Soviet Communist Party's 25th Congress, in February 1976, there were 15,694,000 Communist Party members in the Soviet Union. Of these, 41.6 per cent were workers, 13.9 per cent collective farmers, nearly 20 per cent intellectuals in the technical fields, and 24 per cent workers in science, literature, the arts, education, public health, management and military spheres. There are Communists in every phase of life where they are the hardest working, the most dedicated, the most ready to sacrifice their time and leisure to achieve socialist plans and goals.

The idea that Communists are some kind of fat-cat elite who have special privileges and who run everything has no relation to reality. Authority in the Soviet Union is based on the structural laws of the state, and the person in authority is the one who occupies the position provided by law, regardless of whether he or she is a Communist Party member or not.

Of the 2,200,000 deputies in the local Soviets, 56.2 per cent, that is over a half, were non-Party in 1975. This percentage may be smaller when it comes to Soviets of the higher regional or all-Union level. It prevails in the workers' collectives and in public organisations as well. I recall expressing surprise when Nikolai Fedorenko, of the Writers' Union, told me that Konstantin Fedin, the famous novelist who was president of the Writers' Union, was not a Party member. Said Fedorenko: "It is something of which I never think when I am with Fedin. There is no difference in our outlook."

Socialist democracy is being constantly expanded

We encountered an example of this when visiting the Bolshevik state farm or sovhoz, near the town of Serpukhov, south of Moscow. Our host was the farm's Party secretary, a blond, personable young man. The 8,500 acre farm raises vegetables but also has a dairy herd and modern milking sheds. We were

touring the sheds when one of the milking machine women attendants called the secretary to one side, and a long animated discussion ensued

When he rejoined us he told what it was all about

"That woman feels that she has not been given a job to match her qualifications, and she waited until she had the chance to bring the matter to me. It is not actually my immediate concern but should have been taken up with the dairy administrative unit, and I was trying to make her understand that that is what she should do. I am not ignoring her difficulties but I do believe that this is a strictly managerial problem"

"And how can it be solved?" we inquired

"You ought to know that this is a problem we are still in the process of overcoming. At the 23rd Party Congress a lot of attention was given to broadening democratic participation in all the affairs of our country. On this farm, for example, for a long time it was the custom for everything to be brought to the Party organisation. The practice was taken for granted but it is bad that elected administrators and the unions as well were bypassed. We have been trying to change this. There is a new chairman here in the dairy section. He is a trained technician who knows his job and is treated with regard by the workers. I advised this woman to take her problem up with him rather than the Party organisation."

This episode led me to go over the proceedings of the 23rd Congress of the Party, held in March-April 1966. In the report of Leonid Brezhnev there is a section that has relevance to the milkshed problem

"The Party sees its duty in strengthening ties with the masses, developing socialist democracy . local Soviets must be given a larger measure of independence in dealing with economic, financial and land questions, in guiding local industrial establishments, in providing services and entertainments for the people. Party bodies must completely eliminate petty tutelage of the Government bodies and the practice of overriding them, which begets irresponsibility and inertness on the part of the officials"

' Since that episode on the Bolshevik State Farm I have tried to note the year-by-year implementation of the decision to

further democratise the political system, a decision which came from the initiative of the Communist Party its Political Bureau and its Congress At the 24th Congress of the Party in 1971 a proposal was put forward for adopting a 'Law on the Status of Deputy,' which greatly reinforced democratisation and which has resulted in much more initiative being taken by deputies over the whole range of their rights and duties At the 25th Congress in 1976 the question was again referred to by Leonid Brezhnev in his report, but this time to speak of tangible results and of the fact that the work of the local Soviets has now acquired a new dimension.

Above all, it is the Communist Party that has the responsibility of guarding the socialist revolution, and of guiding socialist construction and the overall development of socialist society I believe that every Soviet citizen is fully aware of the fact The expansion of democracy is carefully and precisely coordinated with the expansion of all other aspects of the socialist society and of its relations with the capitalist part of the world I had a chance to judge all that for myself

It was the Party that carried out de-Stalinisation, without any social dislocation and without any interruption of socialist construction. It is the Party that is carrying out the steady growth of participation by the people as a whole in all spheres of management For this reason the Soviet people have approved of including in the new Soviet Constitution Article 6, which goes as follows "The leading and guiding force of Soviet society and the nucleus of its political system, of all state organisations and public organisations, is the Communist Party of the Soviet Union The CPSU exists for the people and serves the people"

I believe it is highly important that the Communist Party, armed with Marxism-Leninism, determines the general perspectives of the development of society and the course of the home and foreign policy of the USSR, directs the constructive work of the Soviet people, and imparts a planned, systematic and theoretically substantiated character to their struggle for the victory of communism It is but natural that all the Party organisations function within the framework of the Soviet Constitution When I got to know the Soviet reality of the seventies, I came to the conclusion that unless this major fact is un-

derstood and recognised, a fundamental feature of the Soviet Union will be missed

The requirements of Communist Party membership have understandably become more stringent as a result of its members' growing responsibility to society

Between the 24th and 25th Party Congresses an exchange of Party cards was conducted with a careful review and reassessment of each member at Party meetings before giving the new card Symptomatically the attitude to the procedure was least of all conventional and the absolute majority of Communists were given the new cards At the same time 347 000 members were dropped from the Party ranks for not living up to the requirements of the Rules

When I think of Communists in the Soviet Union I think of Alexei, a worker in the Central Committee of the Party who has become our dear friend Alexei is an utterly reliable man, tactful yet firm and undeviating from principle His flat is like that of an ordinary worker He is impressively devoted to his family his chemist wife, his two sons, to whom he is indulgent and affectionate

When we ride with Alexei in one of the Central Committee vehicle pool cars (he does not have a car of his own), he sits up with the driver and translates to him the amusing or interesting part of our conversation We have travelled to many cities and republics with Alexei and we have envied him his easy and intimate way with people, with workers in factories we visit and with railway workers, waiters in restaurants, party officials pilots on planes, hotel staffs farmers, old men and women in the streets and even children He is never officious, never commanding using the authority he possesses with politeness, tact and soft-spoken persuasion

While visiting a Pioneer camp near Minsk, we noticed that he smilingly cut through the somewhat bureaucratic act of the camp's adult managers. The Pioneer leaders wanted to inform us of camp's operation, he insisted on having the Pioneers themselves to tell us of how the camp worked

Always Alexei has a sharp eye for the bureaucrat, the petty official with the overinflated sense of authority, the pompous holder of an "important" title, on the other hand he gives res-

pect and consideration to the ordinary employee or worker, particularly for those who are efficient without loss of modesty. For the fawning and obsequious ones he does not conceal contempt or a curt show of disapproval. In all these respects Alexei is not unique among his fellow Party cadres.

My observations have proved that to become a Communist cadre in the Soviet Union is not to shed one's human attributes; one becomes a Communist cadre because one possesses human attributes wedded to dedication and capability.

Only a party composed of such people could carry out socialist construction and guide a society of overall democracy. And these people are, to my mind, the most precious capital of the Communist Party.

#### TRADE UNIONS IN ACTION

Factory and office workers, farm collectives and other bodies directly associated with production are directly involved in the fundamental wealth-creating and wealth-distributing process. Under capitalism this is where inequality begins and from whence it proliferates like an incurable disease.

In a political context, a capitalist apologist will invariably try to steer a discussion of democracy towards the assumed choice between capitalist political parties in an election. When it comes to trade unions, "democracy" is seen to pertain merely to the right of workers to elect their own union officials or to participate in bargaining with the owners of industries for better wages or to take part in strikes and picketing. "You see, workers have rights under capitalism," says the bourgeois propagandist, "but under socialism workers do not have any rights but must work for the state which forbids strikes." Such is one of the innumerable stratagems to which the anti-Soviets resort to divert the question of democracy away from the shop floor truths in the Soviet Union and to falsify them.

In the course of many trips to the Soviet Union my wife and I have visited quite a few factories and plants, as well as state and collective farms, including the Krasnii Proletarii (Red Proletariat) Machine Tool Plant and the Kirov Watch Factory in

Moscow, the new Lenin Oil Processing Plant in Baku, the Kamvol Woolen Kombinat and the Agricultural Machine Factory in Frunze, the Minsk Printing House, the Tashkent Textile Plant, and a number of others.

In each of these plants we have held prolonged discussions with the four main components of factory management and operation—the plant director, and the secretaries of the trade union, the Party and the Komsomol organisations. In addition we have been able to speak with workers on the shop floor, besides visiting worker homes.

At each enterprise the general features have been the same, the only variations being in their size, strength of the work force and in the amount of "profit" for distribution and benefits.

In the Ukrainian Republic we had a particularly long talk about trade union democracy. I have previously mentioned this plant, the Remtchmechanika, which had brought together as a unit 750 workers who had formerly been employed in private or very small repair shops. Now they experience a much higher degree of collective labour which gives them quite a few additional advantages.

The union at this plant was a primary organisation of the Union of Local Industries and Services of the Ukrainian Republic, one of the largest branch trade unions in the Soviet Union.

At the union's republic committee we met the head of the committee's organisation department, Fyodor Efremovich Nishets, who turned out to be a quiet-spoken man dressed in a simple dark suit but wearing the collarless Ukrainian-style shirt, bordered with a red design. He, by the way, was a university graduate who had also studied at the Higher Trade Union School in Moscow.

Nishets explained his union's structure, based on democratic centralism, built as in the case of all unions which now number over 118 million members, from primary organisation to regional committee to republic committee and on up to the All-Union Central Council in Moscow. He made plain that union operation and administration do not lead to bureaucracy. There are only 100 paid employees in the All-Ukrainian Council of Trade Unions (AUkCTU). The work of the organisation, with its

about 20 departments, is handled by a vast system of volunteers. Thus, the AUkCTU has 3,539 "out of staff" (i.e., non-paid staff) members, over 11,000 "out of council" members (volunteers in committees and projects responsible to the council), and over 100,000 volunteer inspectors, controllers and other assistants. Out of the 17.3 million union members in the republic, some five million are members of commissions or committees on a volunteer basis.

Out of the 150,000 local trade union organisations of all types in the Ukraine, only 3,800 are led by paid officials. These are cases of large factories or units of up to 3,000 or more workers, requiring union work that cannot be properly handled by men or women remaining on the shop floor on the job.

We were told that the smallest unit is the trade union group, of which there could be several in a large department or shop, these embrace members of production teams, or brigades, of the plant. Each department or shop then has a committee, and there is an overall factory-wide trade union committee of 11 members. Elections to these committees take place every year, with each committee headed by a chairman.

I asked what qualifications a chairman needs and was told the following experience on the job and in union work; personality (i.e., he must be liked by the workers and get along with them generally), knowledge of production problems in the plant, ability to handle negotiations with management, and readiness to defend other workers' interests in disputes with management.

Each member of the factory committee heads a trade union commission, of which there can be a dozen, dealing with such areas as production (the most important commission), social security, labour disputes, negotiation of collective agreements, labour protection, safety, culture, housing, sports.

In larger plants and in regional and republic trade union committees there are commissions concerned with broader matters. The trade unions are entrusted with the building and administering of sanatoria and rest homes, technological education, house building tourism, nurseries and Pioneer camps.

Members of the commission are recommended by the shop committees, so that each shop is represented. All told, nearly

one-sixth of the total work force is involved directly in one or another aspect of trade union activity in the plant

Each commission member is required to report back to his shop regularly in regard to his commission's work and on his own duties. As I understand, this is trade union democracy in action. But not everything goes smoothly. We were told that 30 per cent or more of commission and committee members are changed yearly, often because of inadequate attention to their responsibilities. The production commission is clearly the most significant of the trade union bodies and it demonstrates best the workers' participation in the running of factories and other establishments. Introducing new techniques, heightening labour productivity and efficiency, improving the quality of products, and organising socialist competition between plants and departments of plants such are but a few responsibilities of the commission at an enterprise. What a striking distinction from trade union responsibilities in capitalist countries, not to mention their rights!

In all factories (including Remtochmechanika) there is an institution called the permanent production conference, in which trade union activists, guided by the production commission, meet regularly on production problems and formulate recommendations to be made to management. This is a graphic illustration of the trade union activists' direct participation in production affairs, which is absolutely impossible under capitalism where there is an unbridgeable gap between the employers and the workers, whereas here they collaborate in a grand and important undertaking. This is a highly salutary practice indeed.

There is still another form of trade union democracy. Managers and directors are frequently asked, even urged, to report to the conference on how recommendations have been acted upon or carried out. Often very sharp criticisms of management develop at these meetings, which in some cases have resulted in the dismissal of the director or his deputies for poor management.

Comprehensive five-year plans for a factory do not go into effect without the approval of the trade union, arrived at after thorough discussion at union meetings. Individual workers can make proposals on whether to increase or decrease plan goals,

and if the majority agree management is advised to correct the figures.

"Not a single plan can be approved," said Nishets, "without approval of the trade union."

Among trade union rights is that of asking management to report to union members on the fulfilment of plans, on betterment of working conditions, and on the development of services and facilities. A manager may be called by union members to account for the failure to fulfill the collective agreement. As far as I remember, Nishets cited several cases of factories in the Kiev region where managers had been dismissed at union insistence in past years.

As far as management is concerned, I was reminded that any manager or director is required to be fully familiar with the Labour Code, which sets out the rights of individual workers. Exact and strict implementation of labour legislation is controlled directly by the trade unions.

In an article in *Komsomolskaya Pravda* for October 8 1970, the process of preparing the new Labour Code was commented upon by G. M. Georgadze, the Secretary of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet:

"The draft law was drawn up and submitted to the Supreme Soviet by the Government of the USSR and the AUCCTU (All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions). This difficult work took several years. The USSR Supreme Soviet also engaged in extensive preparatory work before the Code was adopted. The Commission for Legislative Initiative was active in drawing up the draft law and was joined by other standing commissions of the Chambers at the last stage. Taking part in the elaboration of the draft were representatives of many All-Union and republican state bodies, as well as the Central Committee of the Young Communist League, research institutions, individual experts, and research workers. The draft Code was made public for discussion.

All the remarks of individual citizens, organisations and labour personnel were studied attentively. Not a few changes and additions were made in taking due account of these proposals and several new provisions were included in the draft."

In the new Code workers' rights are reinforced in accordance

with present conditions. For instance, labour disputes, especially those having to do with the discharge of workers by management, are to be considered by courts of law. A quick restoration of any violated workers' rights is thus assured. Managers now have to compensate the enterprises for back pay to workers suffering involuntary absence from the job due to illegal dismissal. This is done, for instance, when a worker is fired without the consent of the trade union or when this is done as a revenge for criticism.

As trade union activists themselves asserted to me, any trade unionist has the right to raise and to discuss all problems concerning himself, and these may go beyond questions arising in the plant itself.

Workers have long enjoyed the right to criticise management but their criticism should be just and well grounded. It is a long established fact that workers dislike fault-finders. Any paid trade union official is held strictly accountable and may be recalled by majority decision.

During the conversation I asked to see the collective agreement, i.e., the agreement negotiated in each factory between the trade union and management. I liked the way it looked: a document of about 75 pages was detailed, well formulated, and signed by the manager and the plant union committee. I went over it page by page with an interpreter and found it not dissimilar, though only in minor detail, to union contracts in my country, with minute details of pay rates for various jobs and of working conditions in each department. The principle of management consultation with the union was specified in many circumstances, and I noted that the union's jurisdiction over the distribution of bonuses was cited.

As is customary, the collective agreement is renegotiated every six months, "for checking up." This is done to ensure that the agreement provisions be strictly observed and the targets met in time and according to the development of the annual production plan. Another salutary function of the trade union is the encouragement of technological improvements and inventions, and these often affect productivity and labour efficiency. This is not frequently seen in capitalist countries.

In reaching collective agreements, the "closed shop" prin-

ple, fought for determinedly by trade unions in capitalist countries to prevent employers from pitting workers against each other, is really not applicable in the Soviet Union and is not an issue, since the right to work, wage levels, working conditions, and protection against dismissal are fixed by law, and trade unions play the main role in the shaping and implementing of labour legislation.

With workers rights established and protected by law, trade union membership in a factory is not obligatory, since the non-union member cannot be a divisive threat to his workmates as is often the case in my country. New workers, particularly young ones, are not immediately accepted into the union or required to join by rule. What I especially noted is a probationary period of at least two weeks, during which the new worker is observed regarding his attitude to work, his habits and his relationships with others. The probationary period is even longer for engineers. A membership recommendation is made by his shop group.

I was surprised to learn that about three per cent of the workers in the Ukrainian Republic, i.e., about 500,000 or more, are not trade union members. Non-membership in a union, of course, may be due to a variety of reasons. Mainly young workers who have just started their working career and workers in very small or individually-manned shops account for quite a number. Since union membership carries tremendous advantages in cultural, sports, social and vacation activities, it is to be wondered what motivates many of those who fail to hold membership. In part, it includes shiftless and troublesome types whom the trade union undertakes to discipline or reform, an extreme step being expulsion from the union, which means exclusion from its special benefits. Prior to this step a variety of other measures may be resorted to withholding of bonuses, decreasing a qualification grade, non-inclusion in the list for places in sanatoria or rest homes. This is not a matter of local union whim or discretion but is a policy corresponding to the norms of Soviet ethics. Various privileges and advantages should be granted primarily to those who discharge successfully and conscientiously their labour duties. It follows from this that careless workers, who violate labour discipline, may be restricted in the

use of such privileges and advantages or even deprived of them It is worth noting that among the measures taken to correct bad habits is an invitation from the union to the whole family of the errant worker to attend a meeting in the plant, at which his case will be discussed Usually, we were told, the worker's reaction will be "Please, punish me in any other way, but don't invite my wife and family!" I believe that workers in any Western country would be impressed by these measures and would consider them justified

Such responsibilities assumed and administered by the workers themselves were certainly not to be found in any U.S. factory where I have worked

The relation of the trade union and the Party organisations, existing together in a plant, is distorted by bourgeois propaganda which tries to make it appear that Soviet trade unions merely follow the commands of the Party or cannot act on their own as far as protecting the workers or serving their interests are concerned This, I can attest, is quite a false picture of how people's organisations, trade unions among them, function in the Soviet Union

The role of the Party is not to substitute for or to assume control of the trade union, but to help it. Party members are members of the trade union in the plant, but the Party organisation has its own, mainly political, functions. At the same time it helps straighten out any difficult situations between management and trade union, and can defend the interests of the union when management fails to abide by an agreement or to carry out trade union proposals

At first I found it strange that only 52 per cent of chairmen of trade union committees in Ukrainian factories are Party members. In the shop committees and workshop groups, the percentage is much lower, only 40 per cent being led by Party members. Having considered the figures I have found nothing strange about them they are by far the best evidence that there is no Party "pressure" on trade union activists

One of the commonest anti-Soviet claims made in the capitalist countries is that Soviet trade unions are "not free." By this is meant that they do not allegedly have "the right to strike," trade union democracy being interpreted only in terms of

the difficult struggle that workers have to conduct in capitalist countries to gain decent wages and working conditions. Soviet reality, on the contrary is such that workers do not need any strikes.

All is different in the West. The fact that the right to strike in capitalist countries is hedged around by a host of laws that restrict and penalise forms of strike action, that strikes are outlawed under penalty of imprisonment or even death in some countries that in many countries only official trade unions under state control can exist, and that in any case strikers are invariably denounced by the media and businessmen and politicians, slandered and accused of holding the country to ransom or even of 'treason for exercising their alleged right to strike' with the police or even military units employed against them, points to an inescapable truth, that trade unions in capitalist countries have an entirely different basis for existence they are organisations of class struggle that are excluded from the decision-making processes of production and profit-sharing, and that are considered a threat to the peace, law and order of the society

In a socialist society, however, trade unions are honoured public organisations that directly participate in the organisation and administration of production, of profit-sharing, and of the whole range of political, social, cultural and recreational aspects of the society. This is specified in Articles 7 and 8 of the Soviet Constitution. Trade union democracy under socialism is not something that takes place merely in a union meeting or in obeying the orders of union officials. Its main task is to guarantee and defend the working people's interests and their well-being and to take part in the actual running of the country

#### CRITICISM IN SOVIET LIFE

Anyone from abroad who has stayed for any length of time in the Soviet Union and has taken the pains to observe how the people act and conduct themselves will have found a good many lies about Soviet socialist society dissipating around him. The friendliness and ease of relationship, the absence of social barriers and class distinctions, the readiness to see the humour in a situation, the help extended to anyone with a problem or in

need of advice, are all obvious, demolishing the anti-Soviet tales about a closed oppressive society and a subjugated people

Thus myth is forcefully dispelled by reality and perhaps the most myth-dissolving observation that can be experienced is of the behaviour of Soviet people who have a criticism, an objection or a grievance to express, including criticism of the authorities.

For decades there has been a standard anti-Soviet claim that the Soviet people are regimented, are denied the right to express opinions, and are put in fear of questioning authority. Tell this to a Soviet citizen and his amusement will echo in the room.

Once I was walking in a Moscow street when I heard a voice raised very loudly. It came from a middle-aged man who was denouncing a policeman who had tried to prevent him from crossing the street at the wrong point. What surprised me, after all that I had heard about the supposedly harsh and roughshod Soviet police, was the patient and mild manner with which the policeman listened to the man, allowing him to let off steam. Then the policeman had it his way. It is noteworthy that the traffic rules are strictly observed.

Soviet citizens do not regard the police as a punitive and persecuting institution as is the case with the police in the capitalist countries, where they are so much abhorred by the working people. There the police is feared and shunned, and with good reason. Indeed during picketing or strikes the policemen go down on the workers mercilessly, using clubs and tear gas. Beatings, arrests, manhandling—everything referred to as arm twisting—is an everyday occurrence taken for granted. The police is always guarding the powers that be.

Conversely, the Soviet policemen are protecting law and order without resorting to such means. There is no need for that since the Soviet people regard them as their defenders strictly abiding by the requirements of the law.

We were viewing the town of Mozhaisk in the company of Alexei and a member of the town's Communist Party committee, when we encountered a citizen who was watching us examine an old church building that we thought had been beautifully restored. The citizen launched into a scathing tirade of

criticism of the communist leader (who he apparently recognised), insisting that the church should have been restored in a more adequate way It was a very vituperative attack but the official merely listened, occasionally making a demurring remark, until the man subsided and left It had all the appearance of a quite ordinary incident, a citizen expressing an opinion, albeit intemperately

We have encountered Soviet citizens sounding off in all kinds of situations They were expressing complaints or indignation to managers, or persons at every level of authority Furthermore, others in the immediate vicinity are likely to join in to take sides in the dispute As the saying goes it is in these disputes that the truth is born

In general, the Soviet people have struck us as the least likely of any people we have met to permit any of their rights, real or fancied howsoever minor, to be infringed upon When this does happen, they are likely to criticise any impropriety, failing formalism or red tape with conviction, emotion and reason and in public

Several times, on aircraft that were loading, we have seen citizens crowd in to occupy space for which they had no valid tickets, their flight having been postponed They have refused to be ejected, complaining about having had to wait too long for a flight, openly resisting officials and airport police, with the other occupants of the plane joining in in criticism of the ones asserting their "rights." Finally, the incidents have been settled by the management, preference being given to elderly people, mothers with children, and invalids. But this is not the point. These are cases of spur-of-the-moment complaints or objection They exhibit spontaneous attitudes, attitudes not likely to be expressed if the climate of the society discourages them

In the Soviet society in which the great majority of people belong to organisations, either political occupational or cultural, the opportunities for expressing opinions are actually much more abundant than in a society that supposedly gives free rein to the individual

In the Soviet Union, every major issue, piece of legislation, plan or policy is brought down to the people for discussion. During such a "referendum" people put forward their amend-

ments and suggestions In addition, anyone can put opinions in writing and channel them up to the highest level of authority Organisations, either local chapters or broader bodies, can send resolutions on critical comments up to government departments, ministries or other bodies. The Soviet dynamic system allows for as much percolation of ideas upward as for bringing of decisions downward

It is a process that has been elevated to a right, in the Soviet Constitution Asserts Article 49

'Every citizen of the USSR has the right to submit proposals to state bodies and public organisations for improving their activity, and to criticise shortcomings in their work.

Officials are obliged, within established time-limits, to examine citizens' proposals and requests, to reply to them, and to take appropriate action

Persecution for criticism is prohibited. Persons guilty of such persecution shall be called to account.

A remarkable example of the weight of individual opinion and expression of criticism occurs in the Soviet Union in the form of writing letters to the press. This has become a major feature of the press in general, every large newspaper devoting extensive space to the printing of readers letters as well as answers to them

Newspapers in capitalist countries have 'Letters to Editor' columns in which comments are made, including criticism of or support for editorial or government policy, but this bears little relation to the way in which this feature of the press has been developed in the Soviet Union. It has become, literally, a form of people's check on shortcomings, failures and wrongs, whatever the source

In the course of travelling in most of the Soviet republics, I have visited the offices of many of the leading newspapers of the Union, where I have discussed with editorial staffs the function and the contents of their papers. Usually I have asked them to go over with me the issues of the paper for the past week, so that I could get an appreciation of what was being printed

The first paper I visited in this way was *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, the organ of the Young Communist League. It was then that my attention was caught by the department of correspon-

dence from readers. I was astonished to learn that the department had received over 400 000 letters during 1966, it was a growing phenomenon, in 1965 the number had been 360 000

Most of these letters were criticisms of injustices, of faults, of bureaucracy concerning both minor and major questions. Every issue is investigated for its veracity, and is brought to the attention of the department or official concerned for an answer. Answers to letters are also published and they often provoke more letters. It is impossible to print all letters, but all receive answers.

This relationship of *Komsomolskaya Pravda* with its readers was obviously highly prized by the editors I spoke to, who told me that much of the paper's contents was shaped by the readers and the type of problems they raised. This paper of the youth has a crusading image in the Soviet Union, and is noted for its harrying of officials to get answers and corrections to problems. It immediately dispatches its correspondents wherever the press interference is required. Such an energetic reaction of the paper is highly commendable, especially as the point is to establish the truth.

On the day of my visit the paper had published the response to a letter of a woman collective farmer who had written to complain about the abusive rudeness of a farm foreman. Her complaint had been acted upon, and the answer told of the disciplining of the foreman. This was an individual and seemingly small matter.

Later the editors brought out previous issues to show me how more serious questions had been handled. Two months earlier letters had come from relatives of two youths who had been sentenced to two years in prison for hooliganism. The relatives complained that the judge's decision and sentencing were improper. The case was investigated and it was discovered that while the youths were guilty the sentence was far too severe. At the paper's request, a court reconsidered the case, cancelled the sentence, and released the youths. The issue had been aired in the paper on October 9 and the correction was made on October 30 three weeks later. This amazing expediency demonstrates the newspaper's enormous authority.

An issue was then under discussion in the paper, stimulated by a reader who had written a letter of criticism of the use of chemical fertilisers which he asserted were endangering nature An authority on chemicals a Lenin Prize winner, had been requested to answer this and he had posed the need for a government department to oversee fertiliser use Many other answers had come on this, and scientific meetings in institutes had examined the problem and proposed their recommendations.

An Armenian student had written that the authorities in a particular university were not observing the proper order of entry of students *Komsomolskaya Pravda* had not only asked for an answer to this by the university but had written a sharp editorial criticising it The rector of the university had been removed

*Pravda* itself the official organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, receives over 500 000 letters per year (nearly 1 400 each day) The letters department of *Pravda* has a staff of 50 to handle the correspondence alone. *Pravda* publishes and encourages letters dealing with shortcomings of, so to speak, national concern Some major shake-ups, removal of officials, and implementation of large innovations follow from criticism (always thoroughly checked) printed in *Pravda* I want to note in passing that capitalist press correspondents in the Soviet Union who send home articles 'revealing' alleged defects of socialism as if they themselves had unearthed them have usually merely been reading the letter pages of *Pravda* and other papers

In Riga I had a long talk with the editors of *Cina* (Struggle), the paper of the Latvian Communists which is the oldest revolutionary publication in the Soviet Union, pre-dating the foundation of *Pravda* The *Cina* editors told me that they received at least 12 000 letters a year, of which they published around 3 000 and sent answers to the rest of them

The process of following up letters of criticism is instructive in itself Questions bearing directly on government departments are brought directly to the officials responsible Technical and scientific issues are referred for answer to the highest possible authority in a given field Criticisms of infractions or abuses of all kinds are usually handed for investigation to papers' corres-

pondents who are located at all major industrial, construction or farm sites, right on the spot

As distinct from capitalist newspapers often acting irresponsibly, there is a careful check, before publication of the truth or reasonable validity of a criticism. This is to avoid irresponsible printing of something that may be slanderous or may do unwarranted harm to a citizen or an official, a significant precaution aimed at treating the Soviet people thoughtfully. A printed word is a powerful authority and is used with laudable care.

*Soviet Kirghizia*, the offices of which I visited in Frunze, said that it received an average of 1 000 letters a month, and that it published about 70 per cent of them. The editor told me that it did not matter what position an official held who might be criticised, if a preliminary check by the paper's staff members indicated that the criticism or complaint had a basis, the letter would be printed. What I liked most of all is the fact that a response on measures taken is normally published.

In *Soviet Kirghizia*, on the day I visited its offices, the letter page had a communication from a worker pointing to faults in planning the construction of a local irrigation system (the paper announced that a special group had been set up to look into this), a letter criticising the bad quality of sugar (it bore the heading "A Sour Lesson"), a letter criticising the lack of initiative of people raising maize, a letter from a group of readers protesting at the failure of local buses to run according to the timetable, and a letter complaining about the quality of articles in *Soviet Kirghizia* itself. Effective measures remained to be taken on each complaint and I was assured that it would be done.

Editors of the *Moldova Socialist*, with whom I had a discussion in Kishinev, said that the paper received 12 000 to 13,000 letters annually, it was impossible to publish them all so a selection had to be made of those with the most important or serious relevance, but every one received was answered, not merely by the paper's staff but by people of authority to whom letters were referred. And they considered it a matter of their conscience. Often letters of criticism were the stimulation for articles in the paper.

Also in Kishinev I spoke to editors of the *Evening Gazette*,

who said that every day letters were received containing criticism of leaders or managers, often minor in nature but sometimes grave, all are dealt with

Leaders of the Journalists Union in the republic of Georgia agreed that the busiest department in all of the republic's papers was the letters section. They informed me that it is part of a journalist's training to have instilled an appreciation of the intimate relation between a newspaper and its readers, and the need to react to the sentiments and attitudes of the people. The paper serves as the pulse of the life of the republic.

Criticisms are not confined to the questions I have mentioned. *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, for instance, prints letters that criticise technique, form and content of the arts and also numerous reviews and they all usually stimulate response.

In its editorial of December 14, 1976, *Pravda* called for even greater attention to working people's letters. Steadily to abide by the Leninist line, invariably to rest on collective experience, attentively to treat letters from the working people, their bits of advice and their critical remarks, means to strengthen the Soviet people's noble feeling of personal involvement by every one of us in the great task of Communist construction."

Most of the 8,000 newspapers in the Soviet Union publish letters in this way. I would estimate that over 10,000 Soviet citizens write serious letters of criticism to the press each day, and this is only one avenue of opinion expression. Such a continuous flow of opinions, problems, recommendations and critical remarks, occurring year after year, is not conceivable in an atmosphere of repressed opinion, a hobbyhorse of the anti-Communists. The people speak out because they are confident that their complaints will be answered and that they will not be persecuted for their criticism. Above all, they help Communist construction with their practical suggestions and consider the press the most effective vehicle of that.

#### FREEDOM OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF

Among the ordinary people whom I have met in the United States, Britain, the Philippines and other capitalist countries, surprise has been most often expressed when I have mentioned

the existence of religious freedom in the Soviet Union. That this reaction occurs is due to the particularly pernicious variety of anti-Soviet propaganda that has tried to create the impression that the Soviet Union persecutes religious believers and denies them liberty of conscience.

During the first decades of Soviet power the capitalist press carried systematic stories about "godless" Bolsheviks who allegedly destroyed churches, shot priests and compelled everyone to be atheists.

Falsehoods of this kind are not easy to be circulated today for two main reasons: knowledge of religious freedom in the Soviet Union has grown considerably as millions of visitors have seen it for themselves and as world church bodies have increasingly worked in association with representatives of churches in the Soviet Union, and a sharp decline has occurred in religious belief, church attendance and attention paid to religious appeals in the leading capitalist countries in recent decades.

The Soviet Constitution guarantees freedom of religious worship among the fundamental rights of citizens. As defined in Article 52 of the Constitution, freedom of conscience in the Soviet Union operates much more as a democratic freedom than is the case in the capitalist countries I know. It is ensured not only by a strict separation of church from the state and of the school from the church but also by guaranteeing the right to profess no religion at all. It is the upholding of this latter right, without which no genuine freedom of conscience is possible, that has been used by anti-Soviet propagandists to distort and falsify the status of Soviet religious freedom.

In our early youth, both my wife and I had been church-goers, mainly as a family obligation, but we had discarded our half-formed beliefs as soon as we became mature enough to understand ideas and their meaning. An important part of this process was our observation of the hypocrisy and demagogic with which religion and its moral concepts were used to promote political ends that were harmful to people's interests. We developed a Marxist-Leninist outlook, but we recognised that while only such a philosophy could guide the construction of socialism and of Communism, religious belief, if strictly based on its good moral concepts, could help and not hinder socialist

construction, especially in its emphasis on brotherhood and peace

When we have visited the Soviet Union we have made a special effort to investigate and to understand the role of religion and the scope of religious freedom We have undertaken to attend religious ceremonies in many churches of different denominations in mosques and in synagogues We have interviewed leading dignitaries, and we have visited a seminary and church academy We have had long talks with Soviet officials responsible for religious affairs and with Soviet citizens about their attitudes toward religion It has given us a fairly comprehensive picture of religious life in the Soviet society and it bears no resemblance to the grossly distorted cartoon of that life that is frequently projected in capitalist countries

Just as the overthrown classes of capitalists and landlords opposed Soviet power and sought in every counter-revolutionary way to destroy it so the hierarchy and priests of the Russian Orthodox Church, which was the state church of tsarism, a wealthy property-owning church, called for all-out opposition to Soviet power by its believers Archbishop Tikhon holding the highest post at the time proclaimed anathema on the Soviet state, and a whole regiment of priests fought against the Red Army during the Civil War Later the Orthodox Church declared opposition to the industrialisation and the collectivisation of agriculture In the same way, in the Central Asian republics, the Moslem mullahs sided with the overthrown feudal classes, resisting Soviet power

Although the Soviet decree on the freedom of conscience was issued at the time of the October Revolution relations between the Soviet state and the dominant churches remained strained until in mid-1930s the exploiting classes were completely eliminated and the church lost its ground for hostile activities This made it possible to set peaceful relations between the Soviet state and all religious organisations

At the offices of the All-Union Council on Religious Affairs in Moscow, my wife and I had a long talk with the Council's head A Kuroyedov The Council is a state body the main function of which is to supervise the fulfillment of Soviet law on religious cults in every part of the Soviet Union 'Church

opposition that lasted until the 1930s then gradually changed," said A Kuroyedov "The church changed its outlook when it realised that its opposition compromised it in the eyes of believers, who were experiencing the very tangible benefits of socialism. Gradually, loyal attitudes toward the Soviet state developed in church circles

'The loyal attitude was most evident during the Great Patriotic War, when the church played a very positive role, it prayed for the victory of Soviet arms and in all possible ways contributed to the victory of the Red Army over the nazi hordes. Its assistance in financing and collecting large sums of money for planes and tanks can hardly be overestimated

"Our present Council had its origins during the War, as the Council on Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church, since broadened to include all religions. Since that time a cooperative position has been maintained "

. There are 13 main religions in the Soviet Union, 32 smaller sects, and over 20,000 various churches. Besides the Russian Orthodox Church, the largest are the Moslem faith, the Catholic Church and the Baptist Church "In some of the smaller sects there are not many people, but our Council gives attention to the liberty of all," said A. Kuroyedov

We had an opportunity to interview the then head of the foreign relations section of the Russian Orthodox Church, Metropolitan Nikodim. He was at the time also a member of the executive body of the World Council of Churches. (Metropolitan Nikodim was the Patriarch's locum tenens of the Russian Orthodox Church.)

Our Constitution guarantees freedom of religious conscience," Metropolitan Nikodim told us, confirming everything as stated by A Kuroyedov 'I can assure you that this is scrupulously observed I myself was born 12 years after the Revolution. My family was a non-religious one, my parents were just indifferent to religion, although my grandfather had been a believer That background in itself and the fact that I am a Metropolitan now, proves that people have the right to realise freedom of conscience It depends on one's own wish "

Metropolitan Nikodim was very positive about the healthy condition of the church after half a century or more of socialism.

Fingering the large crucifix that hung on a gold chain against the black flowing robes, below the great black beard, he cut an imposing figure and obviously enjoyed considerable authority Nikodim compared the situation of the church in tsarist times with its situation today

Before 1917 our church was a state institution, with special privileges, supported by the state It was virtually obligatory to belong to the church, and many who did were without sincerity Because of a forced obligation, in intellectual circles there was a nihilist approach, a cold attitude toward religious questions A priest was affected by this, too, because it is morally hard to perform religious duties knowing that people do not really believe.

"After the Revolution this changed Belonging to the church became a private matter, an affair of the conscience Those who had belonged to the church in only a formal sense left, the sincere believers remained Compared with pre-Revolution times, professed believers are fewer but they are sincere believers, and that is very satisfying to a priest"

Since religious belief is viewed as a personal matter, no statistics are maintained in the Soviet Union on church membership Neither A Kuroyedov nor Metropolitan Nikodim would venture an opinion on the number of members A. Kuroyedov said that rough estimates might be gained from sociological studies or from observation of church attendance, the Metropolitan said that many believers attended a church service only several times or even once a year, many others only once in several years In our visiting attendance of services in Orthodox and Catholic churches in both cities and towns we noted the great preponderance of elderly people attending, especially elderly women

We were told that in the Soviet Union there are special facilities for training priests two Orthodox Church academies (universities) and three seminaries (they are in Leningrad, Zagorsk and Odessa) Also, there are two Catholic seminaries and a Moslem training school, while the Baptists and other sects have their own training schools for ministers or other church dignitaries

At the Orthodox monastery in Zagorsk, where there is a sem-

inary and academy, we spent hours talking with the monastery and academy officials. At that time there were 250 students in training for priesthood about evenly divided between the seminary (secondary school level) and the academy. Every year 40 students are accepted in each. In addition, about 300 were studying for the priesthood by correspondence. Many of those who graduated, however, did not acquire a parish or flock but had first to serve as assistants in monasteries and churches.

The education is free here and the students receive free meals and free clothing and are also paid a stipend.

The monastery library is astonishingly large, over a million volumes. No Index is maintained by the Orthodox Church, and its students and priests are free to read whatever they wish, including the use of the Lenin Library in Moscow. There are no restrictions on seeing films or on any other cultural or informational matter. As a rule, twice a month the All-Union Knowledge Society (Znaniye) sends lecturers to the monastery, on various subjects, the international situation and scientific problems among them.

Said Archimandrite Platon of the monastery 'We want our students to keep pace with the course of life.'

When we spoke with Metropolitan Nikodim we asked him if the church found that its ideology could be compatible with Marxist-Leninist ideology or with the materialist outlook. He replied that science complements religion, and then went on to express an appreciation of Marxism-Leninism. The Metropolitan did not touch upon atheism. Believers in the church, he said, take an active part in the construction of socialist society under Marxist-Leninist leadership on the grounds that Marxism-Leninism has a quite realistic appraisal of life and conditions and that socialism is a wholly just organisation of human life.

Unlike churches in Western countries, the church in the Soviet Union has no social programme, it sincerely accepts that the socialist state properly carries out such a programme for the people. According to the Metropolitan, the church's role is to call for just relations among people.

The most important aspect of this is the role of the church in the promotion of peace and friendship. The church cannot limit itself to calling on its believers to have internal peace and to

love one another, said Nikodim, it must call for peace among all people, it would be strange indeed to call for peace among individuals and not to call for peace among nations. This work for peace should acquire a world scale so that all the nations were friends without defiling their conscience, and the states built their relations on the basis of goodneighbourliness. The Russian Orthodox believers firmly adhere to these principles, which are also shared by members of other cults in the Soviet Union.

For that reason, the Russian Orthodox Church plays a very active part in the World Council of Churches and in other international religious activities. In this it pursues a path fully in harmony with the peace policy of the Soviet Union as a state entity.

It would be quite erroneous to say that the church's situation in the Soviet Union is one of having made peace with the Soviet state, more accurately, the church and the state have found a meeting ground of harmony and cooperation in the development of peace and friendship both among individuals and nations.

#### DUTIES AND RIGHTS

To speak of the rights that people enjoy is only half the case that can be made out for any society. Equally important are the duties and responsibilities of individuals toward the society.

In capitalist society the behaviour of individuals has been shaped by two contradictory factors by the network of laws and regulations that provides punishment for a transgressor or dissenter, and by the social conditions that foster violation and defiance of the laws and regulations. Each of the capitalist countries has increasingly known turmoil, rebellion, outbreaks of popular discontent and protest, and anti-social behaviour.

A US a British or a Filipino citizen is required to abide by laws that protect private ownership and exploitation, but there are no laws (or very inadequate laws) against extremely harmful practices such as racism, war propaganda, pornography, many forms of corruption, and gross inequality. The measurement of anti-social behaviour in a society that allows or encourages such practices is very different from the measurement of

anti-social behaviour in a socialist society where all socially-harmful practices are banned.

The duties and responsibilities of a Soviet citizen are governed to a much greater extent by the interests and rights of the society as a whole. An individual's behaviour that adversely affects his fellow citizens in any way is treated as an offense against the social order. Thus not only racism and corrupt actions, so characteristic of the West, but rowdism, disorderly public drunkenness, hooliganism, parasitism, offensive language, rudeness, and vandalism are all viewed as violations of socialist standards and principles. A person arrested for such acts of disorderly conduct in a capitalist country is treated as one who has "broken the law" but in the Soviet Union his or her act is treated as a crime against the social order. What is important here is the essence rather than the form and the main distinction in these definitions lies in the attitude to a transgressor.

In the Soviet state less stress is given to punishment than to re-education and the removal of social shortcomings causing the delinquency, and it is the people's organisations that assume the responsibility for this. The "comradely courts," the Komsomol, and, particularly, the trade unions are involved in the process.

Here is but one example. In the Dzerzhinsky district of Moscow my wife and I attended a trial in a People's Court of two young men charged with hooliganism. They had attacked and beaten in the street a worker at an industrial plant who had been restraining another youth from throwing stones at the plant windows. Both young men worked in factories, and their trade union collectives had discussed the cases and had sent representatives to act as public advocates in the court.

One of the young men charged had a record of delinquency and of poor attitude to work. Although this was brought out, attention was also paid to his bad family situation, his father having died and his working mother being unable to give proper attention or parental care to the youth. In view of his bad record that had affected his work, the trade union sided with the accusation and agreed with the verdict of guilt and the punishment (three years' sentence of corrective labour).

The other young man had no past record of hooligan behaviour and had apparently been following the lead of the other

more aggressive youth. In his case, the trade union collective requested that he be turned over to them for re-education, which was done I find this kind of justice both fair and humane

We were also able to visit a colony for delinquent youth of 14 to 18 years old This correctional institution is located in a picturesque part of the Moscow region In a tour of the dormitories we noted that many of the beds were empty, indicating that the capacity of the colony was far from strained

On the contrary, we were told that thanks to competent work repeated commissions are rare Delinquent boys come almost wholly from the cities, the collective control measures being more effective in the rural areas where everyone is in the public eye.

In colonies, the main emphasis was on "re-education in the spirit of labour," the ideas of the famous educator of delinquent boys in the early days of Soviet power, Anton Makarenko, being observed

This is supplemented with the goal of giving them good labour qualification to use in the future The shops we saw were well-equipped and devised to teach specialisation All labour legislation in the Soviet Union—on hours, wages, protective devices, etc—prevailed in the colony, as did education legislation The principle was practiced that in socialist society a healthy attitude toward labour and a readiness to play a productive role are fundamental responsibilities of citizens

The collective principle governs life in the colony and socialist competition is constantly carried out, with order being strictly enforced

Public organisations give extensive aid, which brings good results. Groups of delinquents are sponsored by some enterprises, organisations and even famous Soviet citizens who visit the colony regularly Cultural and educational work is considered of great importance

Trade unions play their part, sharing with the militia the responsibility of aiding the return of youths to industries after their release from the colony

Only some of the boys in the colony were recidivists, and there were no "second time" recidivists These figures testify to the effectiveness of labour-based re-education

Prison, of course, is no recreation ground, everything being

strictly regimented here, but the results are good and, as far as I gathered, the colony was successfully reforming juvenile delinquents.

In the post-war years the figures for both crime and prison population have been sharply reduced. Maximum sentences have been cut to 15 years, the death sentence pertains only to exceptional cases. It is important and significant, furthermore, that state and public organisations have been given much greater control over corrective labour institutions, thus enhancing their re-educative capabilities. Having served the term, the convicts are restored to society as full-fledged citizens.

The growing understanding of socialist legality and of civic duty is due to higher consciousness of the people as well as to legal education and to the process of submitting proposed laws to public discussion prior to their adoption. We found legal education to be carried out on a very wide scale.

One sector of Soviet law that is widely and generally understood and accepted as correct has to do with crimes against the state. Political education and education in patriotism have engendered a high sense of duty in regard to defence of the state and of the socialist society. Soviet patriots would not cede their accomplishments to anybody. They are particularly vigilant of anything unlawful and would not let their homeland be denigrated or slandered, intent to thwart all attempts to undermine Soviet power.

Capitalist propaganda against the Soviet Union tries to make it appear that it is somehow undemocratic or restrictive of free speech to make anti-Soviet agitation a crime (the same is said even about war propaganda). People in capitalist countries, it is claimed, are not usually charged with a crime if they agitate against capitalism. The claim is not really true, there are all kinds of 'anti-subversive' laws in all capitalist countries. It is precisely the difference in the two societies that makes the comparison inappropriate.

Capitalism is a thoroughgoing exploiting class society that is harmful to the interests of the working class that comprises the great majority of people, and agitation against capitalism, its methods and injustices benefits working people's interests, the

working class, in fact, has fought for the right to advocate socialism in place of capitalism

In the Soviet Union, however, a society without exploiters has been established in which the working people have built the developed socialism of which they had dreamed and for which they had struggled Anti-Soviet agitation of a subversive nature can only have the aim of disrupting the society and of reversing the gains made by the people in struggle and in construction (It is very noticeable that among the very few 'dissidents' given publicity in the capitalist press are to be found no workers )

Invariably anti-Soviet agitation is nurtured and supported by anti-Communist forces and various subversive agencies, and Soviet citizens understand this and view the scattered instances of it in the same way they regard counter-revolution, as criminal actions against the interests of the whole people

Defence of socialism, upholding and strengthening of the Soviet system, is not merely a legal obligation for the Soviet citizen, like the blindly obligatory duty demanded of citizens in any non-socialist country It is also the highest moral obligation for the Soviet citizens They are brought up to be loyal to revolutionary precepts, to a socialist code of ethics, to observe the rules of the socialist way of life, its collective principles. They do it all out of their inner conviction.

States Article 61 Citizens of the USSR are obliged to preserve and protect socialist property It is the duty of a citizen of the USSR to combat misappropriation and squandering of state and socially-owned property and to make thrifty use of the people's wealth

Persons encroaching in any way on socialist property shall be punished according to the law "

This kind of duty can only be appreciated in a socialist country like the Soviet Union It would be impossible for a constitution or a body of law in a capitalist country to make it the duty of every citizen to safeguard as sacred the private ownership of the means of production or the privileges of the wealthy capitalist. There is no better indication of the differences between the two systems than the contrasting duties that the two

**systems can ask of their citizens I do not doubt that the Soviet people will do their noble duty**

In his report to the 25th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Leonid Brezhnev had this to say about democracy and duties in the Soviet Union

Indeed in our concern for the all-round development of the individual and of the rights of citizens, we have also given due attention to the problems of strengthening social discipline and fulfillment by all citizens of their duties to society. After all, democracy is inconceivable without discipline and a sound public order. It is a responsible approach by every citizen to his duties and to the people's interests that constitutes the only reliable basis for the fullest embodiment of the principles of socialist democracy and the true freedom for the individual."

## *Chapter VI*

### INTELLECTUALS UNDER SOCIALISM

As one who writes for a living, I tend as a rule to be classified as an "intellectual." Under the circumstances of capitalist society this term has a class implication and is therefore used by bourgeois ideologists in order to foster divisions between social groups, especially between manual workers and mental workers.<sup>1</sup> My own sensitivity to the term is due in part to my relations with my father, who was a factory worker, a metal polisher, a trade unionist, who preferred that I do the same or similar work. He thought that it was honourable to work, to work hard, and not be ashamed of getting one's hands dirty. I also spent my early years in factories. The period of my best relationship with my father was when we both worked in the same factory, in the same shop as metal grinders and polishers. When I gravitated toward trying to be a writer, it caused endless friction with my father, who thought that anyone who spent so much time thinking, reading and writing a few words now and then after intervals of motionlessness, was some kind of parasitic idler. Even though I respected my father I could not agree with him. Without much political grasp he vaguely associated the intellectually-inclined with exploiters, the white-collar "bosses," upstairs and remote from the shop-floor workers, in their clean air-conditioned offices.

Erroneous as I knew this outlook to be, it left an unreasoning imprint of half-guilt and shame upon me for not persisting in earning my living through physical labour a feeling that has never entirely left me and that has made me drive myself to prove to myself and to others that I am not an idler. As a

mental worker, I am a worse taskmaster to myself than any capitalist employer could be to me in a factory. If I am an intellectual, then I am a working-class intellectual, proud of having worked with my hands as well as my mind and able to feel the comrade and the equal of an industrial worker. Undoubtedly this has been a factory in my developing a working-class ideology.

Something very much similar to this might have taken place in the revolutionary Russia and my personal experience has made me profoundly interested in the role of the intellectual in the Soviet Union, particularly the unity and inter-relation of the Soviet intelligentsia and workers.

Under capitalism, the mental worker is either persuaded or made to feel in an infinite number of ways that his interest and livelihood lie with the established order and its perpetuation. To a much greater extent than the industrial worker, the intellectual has difficulty in making a living if he does not conform to the ruling ideology. A worker in a factory may be militant or revolutionary in his attitude and still retain his job, especially if he belongs to a trade union that fights for its members' interests, but a radical scientist, writer or university teacher are tolerated to a far less degree and are under the pressure to conform or lose their posts with a "spoiled" reputation.

Above all, intellectuals in any capitalist country are made to believe that they are individuals who stand apart from the mass of people, that individual freedom (sometimes called 'intellectual freedom') is their peculiar right howsoever vague it may be, and that this individual freedom is to be cherished because no other member of society enjoys it. The social system is to be thanked and protected for making all this possible.

Symptomatically as soon as one joins a radical organisation or associates oneself with the working class in mass action, this notorious individual freedom is curtailed or eliminated. The fact that mental work is usually more highly paid than manual work also tends to set the intellectual apart from the worker. Still there are intellectuals under capitalism who do align themselves with working-class struggle for socialism.

The processes that tend to isolate most intellectuals from the industrial working class in capitalist society have their varia-

tions in such countries as the United States, Britain and the Philippines.

In Britain, where class distinctions are much more clearly drawn than in other capitalist countries, the educational system itself is deliberately fashioned to guarantee that universities are attended chiefly by sons and daughters of wealthy or upper middle class families, they graduate virtually by birth-right into the scientific, literary, academic, political and other intellectual or professional posts, with a commitment to uphold the society that has put them there and to oppose a working-class challenge to their "traditional" rights. An event still remembered with bitterness by the British workers was the role of scabs and strike-breakers played by university students and civil servants of the "Ox-Bridge" type (Oxford and Cambridge graduates) during the General Strike of 1926. A repetition of this is less likely today to the same degree, but the British intellectual élite continue to be a mainstay of British capitalism.

In the Philippines, the intellectual for centuries has occupied a special élite position in society. During the long period of Spanish colonial rule, a special term, the 'illustres' (enlightened), was applied to the educated élite from well-to-do Filipino families, who looked down upon the 'great unwashed,' as the working class were called. In Philippine history, the 'illustres' are accused by proletarian movements of having betrayed the Great Revolution—as the national liberation revolution of 1896-98 was called—against Spanish colonialism and the US imperialism that replaced it at the turn of the century. Because of this, for some time an anti-intellectual attitude persisted in the working-class movement and even in the Communist Party of the Philippines, after its foundation in 1930, only being removed when the economic depression and anti-fascist struggles of the latter 1930s revolutionised many Filipino intellectuals and led them to embrace a Marxist ideology. In Philippine society itself, however still heavily influenced by colonial customs and way of thinking, the intellectual for the most part continues to occupy an élite position that sets him off from those who do manual work for a living. He is separated from the working class by numerous social barriers.

As for the United States, the divisions by income and occupa-

tion are sharp and are skillfully utilised to drive wedges between workers and their possible allies. Perhaps there is no clearer illustration of this than the invention of the term "egghead" applied to intellectuals. This term is a populist or working-class jibe directed at the well-paid mental worker, but it was the capitalist press that picked it up and magnified it into a word of daily usage in order to destroy a mass following for progressive politicians of intellectual stature. "Egghead" is employed frequently to foster an attitude of ridicule, antagonism and hostility among workers for intellectuals who move toward associating themselves with left-wing causes. It also embodies an underlying contempt by those of wealth and power toward those whose mental labour is as much on the market as the physical labour of the industrial worker.

As the general crisis of capitalism in the modern era has become ever deeper, the influence of the bourgeoisie on the middle class and intellectual strata is becoming less significant. During the Great Depression of the 1930s mass unemployment included large numbers of intellectuals whose experiences were common with those of workers and who underwent the process of radicalisation. They developed an interest in the theory and practice of socialism. Anti-fascist movements drew many because of the inhumanity and cultural degradation of fascism.

In recent decades a similar response has occurred by intellectuals to the barbarism of imperialist wars of aggression against national liberation movements, with the most active protest being voiced by revolutionary democrats from among the intellectuals.

The tendency for intellectuals to ally themselves with the working class revolutionary movements has grown and has been a matter of special concern to capitalist ruling circles.

Responding to this tendency, anti-Soviet propaganda alleges that socialism and a "free" intellectual life are incompatible.

The current drumfire of propaganda about allegedly suppressed intellectual "dissidents" in the Soviet Union has really been a subtle form of intimidation of the progressive intellectuals in capitalist countries, to persuade them to conform to bourgeois concepts in the name of "intellectual freedom." Socialism, it is asserted, denies to individuals—i.e., individual intellectuals—the

freedom that is supposedly inherent in their lot under free enterprise capitalism Soviet intellectuals are depicted as individuals putting themselves against a vast, regimenting state, individuals said to be stifled by a collective that allegedly cannot abide "intellectual freedom"

There are two basic fallacies in this kind of propaganda it gives a false picture of the position of intellectuals under capitalism and it gives a false picture of the position of intellectuals under socialism

### THE ISSUE OF CONFORMITY AND NON-CONFORMITY

From the time I first became aware of what the Soviet Union and its socialist way of life meant to humanity, I have understood that the challenges to intellectuals under socialism, having to do with the building of a new and more just society, are far more stimulating and exciting than the challenges to intellectuals under capitalism

The enthusiastic way in which Soviet intellectuals, in a socially-committed participatory manner have risen and continue to rise to the challenges before them, is one of the truths about socialism that has most upset anti-Soviet propagandists One of the arguments they reach for in trying to explain the phenomenon away is that Soviet intellectuals suffer from "conformity".

In part this kind of propaganda is aimed at the growing numbers of left-wing intellectuals under capitalism who do not defend the capitalist system and what it stands for, but criticise and oppose its motivations and methods The aim is to persuade these non-conforming intellectuals that a change to socialism is not for them because they would have to conform under it.

Only the most opportunistic and cynical of intellectuals in capitalist society find it possible to come forward to defend the extremes of wealth and poverty, the class injustices, the racial discrimination, the periodic economic crises and mass unemployment, the violence and immorality the organised crime, the militarism the imperialist aggression and exploitation, and the political corruption that prevail in all capitalist countries.

The published confessions of the ‘bright young men’ (house-breakers, in plain words) who became a part of the “Watergate” conspiracy during the Nixon Administration in the United States, which caused Nixon’s resignation, are clear revelations of the corruption of intellectually-inclined individuals entwined in the net of money and power.

In these surroundings, the majority of intellectuals try to evade any commitment other than to their individual interests, confronted as they are with such narrow challenges as the need to hold onto a job or to maintain a frequently precarious standard of living. This pursuit of individual careers and of the social status they may bring is a feature of the competitive scramble known as “the rat race.”

Under capitalism and the class societies that preceded it the great moral judgments by members of the intelligentsia have been made by those who have opposed the basic concepts and features of those societies that have been oppressive for the great masses of the people. This non-conformist attitude—anti-slavery, anti-feudalism, anti-imperialism, anti-fascism—has never been viewed with favour by ruling class interests, which at all times desire that the articulate and educated elite conform and be dedicated to the existing order.

During the 1960s a general phenomenon swept through the universities and the ranks of young intellectuals in all the capitalist countries. This was the upsurge of the nihilism of the ‘hippies,’ the flower people, and the “beat generation” and of the more ideological new left, both being characterised by a mass ‘drop out’ or opting out by thousands of the budding intelligentsia from the system around them, which they saw as sick, without moral values, and without a future. Much of this was a reaction to the brutally aggressive US war in Vietnam, to repulsive racial oppression, to political corruption, and to the standards of the ‘rat race.’

This spreading non-conformity among the students and young intellectuals in the 1960s alarmed the establishment in many countries, including those developing toward capitalism like the Philippines.

The prospect of a mass intellectual trend toward socialist solutions was in the air, and a variety of tactics was employed by

ruled circles to thwart it and to divert it into anti-Soviet, anti-Communist and generally sectarian blind alleys

It was as a counterbalance to this upsurge of dissent in the capitalist countries that a propaganda campaign began about 'intellectual dissidents' in the Soviet Union. The aim was to create an impression that the Soviet intelligentsia is regimented and that it is allegedly becoming permeated with dissatisfaction with socialist principles, supposedly causing a spreading dissent with the Soviet way of life similar to the non-conformist trend occurring in capitalist countries. It was alleged that Soviet "dissidents" wanted "individual freedom" like that reportedly enjoyed in capitalist countries.

The most distinguishing feature of this kind of anti-Soviet propaganda has been its hypocrisy. Those who foster and magnify an alleged non-conforming "dissidence" in the Soviet Union, playing it up as a "great movement for human freedom," are the same ones who brand non-conforming intellectuals under capitalism as treasonous or subversive. At the same time, those who praise the opportunist intellectual defenders of capitalism are the same ones who sneer at and defame Soviet intellectuals who dedicate themselves to the socialist system.

Although the intention has been to disillusion the dissenting intellectual under capitalism by making it appear that the Soviet intelligentsia is as reactionary and subversive as opportunist intellectuals under capitalism, and that his natural ally in intellectual freedom is the "Soviet dissident," the truth is actually the reverse: the so-called "Soviet dissident" is the bedfellow of the opportunistic intellectual defender of capitalism.

On every great moral question and judgment of the age—peace, national liberation, racial equality, the friendship and cooperation of peoples, aid to developing countries—Soviet intellectuals have a stand identical with that of the progressive intellectuals in capitalist countries, while the handful of alleged "Soviet dissenters" have aligned themselves with the capitalist militarists, suppressors of liberation movements, and enemies of detente.

An intellectual who upholds and accepts the standards and morals of a decaying and increasingly restrictive capitalist society designed to keep wealth, power and privilege in the hands

of a few is a conformist intellectual of capitalist society. His antipode is the intellectual who serves the ideals of an entirely different society that is designed for the equitable and growing well-being of all its members. The latter is an intellectual of the socialist stage. The only thing in common between these two types of the intelligentsia is their name, whereas their class and social affiliations are fundamentally different.

All that has been said makes it possible to give a true image of today's Soviet intelligentsia.

The responsibilities and moral standards expected of Soviet intellectuals are determined by the political system and social organisation of the Soviet Union. There is conformity to the collective interest, to the collective goals, and to collective procedures. There is conformity to majority decisions, arrived at and implemented through democratic voting and democratic centralism. An intellectual like any other worker is dedicated to the socialist ideas in all aspects, first and foremost, in his or her profession.

It is quite true that the most noble task of a citizen in the Soviet Union and in other socialist countries is the discharge of his labour duties. The general public, the party and trade union organisations have a right to condemn anti-social behaviour of any kind, which goes against the interests of the collective, and to disapprove individualistic attitudes that are considered retrogression toward outmoded and harmful ways.

Anyone, intellectual or worker, who advocates or attempts to promote a bourgeois type of individualistic anti-social freedom or who opposes the socialist system itself, is not viewed with sympathy by the Soviet people. I think it is a form of self-preservation in which the system relies on public opinion and not in the least a strict regulation of the citizens' private lives as the anti-Soviet detractors are wont to picture it.

There can be no doubt that the question of "conformity" and "dissidence" as presented in the capitalist media does not at all correspond to the facts of intellectual life in the Soviet Union.

The so-called "dissident" phenomenon to begin with, is enormously exaggerated in the West. Those involved number, by admission of the most hostile propagandists themselves, no more than a few dozen in a population of over 260 million, and it

has been admitted that no Soviet workers or farmers have had the least sympathy with them.

More important, those identified as "dissidents" have been encouraged to behave so through links with reactionary, anti-Soviet elements in the capitalist countries. Without the publicity, the monetary assistance, and the goading by enemies of the Soviet Union, the so-called "dissidents" would hardly have appeared at all or, what is more probable, would have had their grievances resolved within the collective processes of Soviet life.

The "dissident phenomenon" is not the growth of a new trend in socialist society, it is one of the last gasps of the capitalist mentality that has been kept in fanned existence by persistent subversion from the capitalist countries.

#### THE CREATION OF A SOCIALIST INTELLIGENTSIA

I must admit that my first understanding of the Soviet Union as a "workers state" was a rather limited one, conceived in terms of the labouring man or woman at a machine in a factory or driving a tractor on a collective farm. The idea of an intelligentsia playing an active part in such a society was scarcely grasped. I knew that there were Soviet writers, artists and other cultural figures—I could see and read what they created—but I had only a vague idea of how these related to the working class.

It has taken many visits to the Soviet Union and close acquaintance with its intellectual life to enable me to understand a society in which physical and mental labour are put on the same level, are equal, intertwined and in harmonious interchange.

A basic consideration to be grasped is that there is a capitalist intelligentsia and a socialist intelligentsia, and that there is a world of difference between them.

Generally speaking, the Soviet intellectual—flesh and blood of a worker and a peasant—is a conscious worker for the new, socialist, society and for the development of the communist society. Unlike most capitalist intellectuals, he is motivated by an ideology, which is Marxism-Leninism. Whereas the average US,

British or Filipino intellectual consciously or unconsciously accepts the private capitalist as central to his society, for the Marxist intellectual a basic tenet is the recognition of the working class as the prime factor in the social and production relations of socialism.

On this ideological level there is a wide gulf between socialist and capitalist intellectuals, they may peacefully coexist on the professional level, and agree on many mutually acceptable questions, but if any actual crossing of that gulf occurs it will be done when the intellectuals of the old society come to accept the ideology of the new, not the other way around. This logically follows from the theory of changing socio-economic formations.

During the pre-Revolution period and when the October Revolution took place, some brilliant intellectuals joined the Bolshevik Party and others supported it. However, the bulk of the intelligentsia from tsarist times either remained passive or else went into exile or actively fought the Soviet Republic in the counter-revolutionary forces.

In all the socialist countries it proved possible to energise a sufficient number of reconstructed intellectuals to serve the workers state, and many did so with enthusiasm and genuine rebirth. However, an important problem faced the Soviet leaders and was recognised from the outset, the need to develop from the ground up and from the cradle a truly socialist intelligentsia, completely part of and devoted to building a socialist way of life.

This was accomplished through a massive cultural revolution, the first step of which was a campaign to eradicate illiteracy. Barely 25 per cent of the population was literate in 1917, and among workers and peasants illiteracy was almost complete. The task was successfully carried out in a short period of time, which, to my mind, is a unique experiment and no mean feat.

The aim of the educational programme outlined in 1919 was the all-round education of a fully developed member of communist society. An All-Russia Extraordinary Commission was promptly set up to combat illiteracy, its efforts aimed in the beginning at making literate those in the most active age range, between 9 and 50 years. By 1926, 65.6 per cent of this sector

was literate, and by 1939 literacy had been spread to 87.4 per cent of the population. Recent UNESCO surveys confirm Soviet assertions that complete literacy now prevails for the entire Soviet population, an achievement that was reached by 1960.

The educational level, which is an accomplishment of Soviet power, is steadily growing. Compulsory secondary education was added to the primary one and numerous institutions of higher learning train experts in diverse fields. Their number and the quality of education is admired throughout the world.

The Soviet intelligentsia, therefore, is produced from a system of continually expanding universal compulsory secondary education and also from a ramified network of various higher educational establishments. Brain workers, who are highly qualified, open-minded and ideologically dedicated, are no longer isolated occurrences but are being trained here on a mass scale, in which the Soviet Union is unmatched by any other country or society.

This is especially true of higher education, by far the most important sphere of education. In 1914 there were but 105 institutions of higher learning of all types in tsarist Russia, with 127,400 students. By 1976 there were 859 institutions of higher learning in the Soviet Union, with 5 million students, the latter being a 39-fold increase. With each five-year plan the number of graduates from higher educational establishments has been accelerated. In 1977, for instance, 752,000 received higher education, which was to satisfy the needs of the considerable and speedy growth of the various sectors of the Soviet national economy.

A statement by Lenin best indicates the scope and spirit of the intellectual training of the Soviet student. He said that Communists must enrich themselves with the wealth of knowledge accumulated by mankind. This Leninist tenet presupposes the Soviet intellectual and expert to be trained as a patriot of the socialist society and dedicated proponent of Communist ideology. This is one of the conclusions I drew from observing Soviet reality with my own eyes.

## THE SCOPE AND CHARACTER OF THE SOVIET INTELLIGENTSIA

It is a curious fact that in countries where propaganda is prevalent giving a distorted impression of Soviet intellectuals and their attitudes, the idea of what constitutes an intellectual or intellectual life is hazy or very limited. Whether in the United States where anti-intellectualism has been a common phenomenon, or in Britain where the learned professions and their attainment are most often associated with wealth, or in the Philippines where the colonial concept of an "illustrado" educated elite has not yet been off-set by the broader educational opportunities that have accompanied independence, an intellectual is most commonly conceived of in the esoteric sense, as an "ivory tower" individual concerned with thoughts or endeavours that are beyond the range of everyday life, as an "absent-minded professor" type who lives in a world of his own, or as an abnormal "genius" who belongs in a "think tank" or a "brain trust" and who may be occasionally persuaded to leave the ivied seclusion of a university to be an "adviser" in government. (The US President John F. Kennedy was considered unusual and impractical for staffing his administration with intellectuals and academics.)

In the Soviet Union there is no question about what constitutes the intelligentsia, and intellectuals are not only held in esteem but are seen as standing, not on pedestals, but shoulder to shoulder with other citizens. The not-so-easy brain work has quite a few forms; hence the intelligentsia is not viewed as a small group of rarified individuals whose functions are suited to or at the service of the well-to-do but is seen as a large and growing sector of the people who are trained as specialists in serving society as a whole. Anyone can become a specialist, and there are no barriers of class or income to prevent it or make it difficult.

Scientists, workers in science enjoy the highest esteem in the Soviet Union. At the apex of Soviet intellectual life is the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, which was founded over 250 years ago. After the October Revolution V. I. Lenin participated in working out a plan of research work of the Academy, which

follows his behests, seeking to extend and deepen knowledge of the world. It is this gigantic task that all the academicians are working to accomplish.

A great network of research institutes, few of which had existed prior to the Revolution, is highly impressive. Today there are over 5,300 research institutes, something of which tsarist Russia could not even dream. The Academy itself has 14 duplicate bodies, located in the union republics, and six branches in autonomous republics. There are also several topical academies—pedagogical, medical and others. This is indeed something to be proud of.

I was particularly impressed with the newest of the republic academies, in Kirghizia, which in 1917 was a backward country and could not even dream of scientists. Its scarce population was comprised of nomadic peoples. Under socialism, this giant stride forward was made in a remarkably short period of time..

Outstanding scientists are elected to the Academy and they are not remote "eggheads." Whereas few American or British people could identify offhand the leading scientists in any field in their countries, many academicians are household names wherever one goes in the Soviet Union, where they are given constant and major prominence in the press, on television, in cinema documentaries, or in public visits to enterprises. A scientist does not spend his life in a laboratory or a library, but is a public figure who is to be found in Supreme Soviets, in friendship societies, in varied organisations and activities that bring him in regular contact with the working population.

Here are a few striking figures around 250 scientific institutions are directly linked with the Academy of Sciences, they are staffed with over 40 000 research workers. These institutes carry on vast programmes of research and study, having to do with the physical or natural sciences but also with the social sciences. The activity of these research centres is, of course, determined by state plans according to their research potentials.

The institute with which I am most familiar is the Institute of Oriental Studies. Its main research departments are in Moscow where studies on the history, economy, politics, geography, labour movement, languages, literature and other aspects of every Asian country are carried on. A branch in Leningrad spe-

cialises in Chinese and Japanese languages and ancient manuscripts, and there are Republic Institutes of Oriental Studies in Tashkent and Baku

The late Academician B G Gafurov was a long-time director of the Institute of Oriental Studies. A native of Tajikistan he was a man of soft-spoken calm demeanor and an outstanding authority on history, policy and independence movements and on socio-political development in Asia as well as in his own Soviet Central Asia

At the Institute I am most acquainted with the South East Asian Department and particularly with its Philippine Section, of which Dr George Levinson is the head. My own field of historical research and writing is the Philippines, and I have some knowledge of the work done in this field internationally.

Outside of the Philippines itself, as might be expected, study of this Asian country has been abundant in the two countries that had held it as a colony, Spain with studies from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries and the United States with studies from the time of its seizure of the Philippines in 1898 to the present.

However, in systematic, planned study and research in depth, the Soviet Union, chiefly through its Institute of Oriental Studies, has contributed the most scientific and profound work in this field, accomplished, I might add, prior to the establishment of relations between the Philippines and the Soviet Union in 1975, and when the Institute's scholars were unable to visit Manila, which considerably complicated their research.

Preparation and defence of candidate (master's) and doctorate theses is much more thorough and more rigid than is generally the case in capitalist countries. The Institute's scholars are experts in their field of studies. An interesting fact is worth mentioning. Work in progress is submitted to the collective scrutiny and assessment or criticism of colleagues at regular intervals. However, while engaged on a project, members of the Philippine Section at the Institute of Oriental Studies work very much on their own.

Dr Levinson, the Section head, has written many books and articles on Philippine history, particularly on the development of the Filipino nationalist movement. Olga Baryshnikova, a

candidate of sciences, is the Section's specialist on the Philippine economy Juha Levtonova, a specialist on Philippine political history and also a candidate of sciences, is the author of numerous books on Philippine politics. The scientific study of Philippine languages by Lina Shkarban at the Institute typifies the depth of the cultural approach to Soviet-Philippine understanding. A student of the Philippine language, Igor Podberesky, startled Filipinos with his perfect mastery of their language when he visited there, an accomplishment that very few Americans could display in their long colonial rule of that country. Vladimir Makarenko, another master of the Philippine language, has translated many volumes of Philippine poetry and prose for Soviet readers, who are better acquainted with Philippine literature than US, Spanish or other peoples, while there is no comparable knowledge of Soviet literature in the Philippines.

As is the case with most intellectual workers in the Soviet Union, these specialists on the Philippines have an active public life of civic duties and of regular contacts with the working population. I was surprised to learn that many of them (perhaps sacrificing their research work) visit Soviet cities and towns to deliver talks on Asian problems.

A striking aspect of the work of the departments in the Institute of Oriental Studies is the extremely broad and abundant bibliographical material which they consult and use. Virtually nothing of importance in the field of Philippine life and affairs has not been consulted and cited by them, all available in Soviet libraries and collections, and they are assiduous in obtaining every item wherever published in the world. From personal knowledge, I can attest to the fact that scholars on the Philippines in the United States have very little or no knowledge of Soviet studies in this field, an interesting commentary on the breadth and depth of that scholarship as a matter of comparison.

I would say that this scope of intellectual work displayed in the Institute of Oriental Studies is the case generally in Soviet research institutes. This directly concerns the problem of access to information which is a profitable subject to many inveterate Sovietologists. There are few examples of anti-Soviet propaganda that are less well-founded than the claim that there is no free-

dom of information or no means of access to information about other countries in the Soviet Union (The Lenin Library in Moscow, with its more than 7 million volumes, is the equal if not the superior of the British Museum in London or the Washington Library of Congress or New York Public Library)

In 1972 I obtained a doctorate in history at the Institute of Oriental Studies My thesis for defence had to meet the high requirements imposed on all the papers of this kind and I regard the existing procedure of defending the research done both exacting and fair

Science is known to develop dynamically, attracting a host of enthusiastic investigators. In the Soviet Union as a whole there were over 32,000 Doctors of Sciences (Ph. Ds) and 327,000 Candidates of Sciences (MAs) in 1976. This represented almost a tripling of the number of both degree holders since 1960. In this way the planned advance of socialist science ensures that along with diploma holding specialists scientists and scholars holding degrees join the ranks of the intelligentsia

It is indicative that in the Soviet Union in 1976 there were 1,254 000 or one-fourth the total number of scientists in the world. To get an idea of how vast and rapid the increase has been, one should turn to the figures for 1913, just before the Revolution, when a mere 11,000 scientific workers of all types could be listed in tsarist Russia.

Impressive as the number of scientific research workers may be, they comprise but one sector of the Soviet intelligentsia. Another important sector is that of the engineers, who may be described as the applicators of scientific theorising. There were 3 370 000 Soviet engineers in 1974, an eight-fold increase in the past quarter of a century. By comparison, the United States had only 1,080,000 engineers in 1974, less than one-third of the Soviet total. The more perceptive of US analysts have stressed the significance of raising the number of engineers for the growth potential of the two systems, pointing with alarm to the producing of 294 000 engineers by the Soviet Union in 1974 while the US had produced a mere 57,000, i.e., one-fifth of the former figure. The fact is highly symptomatic and perhaps it is in this field that the groundwork is being laid of success in the Soviet Union's economic competition with the major capitalist power.

The Soviet intelligentsia includes scientific workers, engineers, teachers (no fewer than 2 600 000 in general education schools in 1976), doctors (862 000 the same year, making the Soviet Union first in the world in the number of doctors per 10 000 inhabitants), creative cultural and artistic workers, journalists and editors, trained administrators, lawyers and jurists, economists, and a very large number of other specialists.

What might be termed the pool or reservoir of intellectual life in the country is the number of those who have had a higher education or a specialised secondary education. By 1976 there were 3 333 000 Soviet citizens who had completed higher education and 2,600,000 others who had had a partial higher education. Graduates with a specialised secondary education numbered 21 518 000 while there were 37,200,000 more who had had a general secondary education.

Communist Party General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev gave a vivid picture of a present-day specialist 'The Soviet specialist today is a man who has well mastered the fundamentals of Marxist-Leninist teaching, who clearly sees the political aims of the Party and the country, who possesses extensive scientific and practical training and who has raised his profession to perfection. This Soviet specialist today is an able organiser capable of applying in practice the principles of scientific organisation of work. He is able to work with people, values the experience of the collective, heeds the opinions of comrades, and critically appraises what has been achieved. And, of course, a specialist of today is a highly cultured person, an erudite person in general he is a real intellectual of the new socialist society.'

The Central Statistical Board listed in 1977 a total of 37.5 million Soviet people engaged wholly in mental labour, out of about 118 million actively engaged in the national economy as workers and employees. Standing at nearly one-third of the total, this percentage is constantly growing owing to the increase in the number of various trades and professions designed to satisfy the growing needs of scientific and technological progress.

The Soviet intelligentsia with its large core of academics and scientists as well as highly trained creative workers is an integral part of the socialist system and is molded into the collective society that it embodies. Educated and trained in the collective

spirit, the Soviet intellectual is not nurtured in the cult of individualism or of dedication to selfish interests, let alone greed. This only does him credit.

Far from making him less cultured or less erudite this broadens the horizon of his outlook and of his activity to an extent not experienced by the average intellectual in a capitalist country whose profession is usually circumscribed by far more narrow class considerations.

The Soviet intelligentsia's creative viability coupled with their invariable desire to serve loyally their homeland is an outstanding accomplishment of the socialist system.

#### A MASS INTELLECTUAL LIFE

In the present-day world the intelligentsia of any nation needs to be assessed in relation to the extent of intellectual activity and culture among the people from which it is derived or amid which it exists. All societies and nations have had great intellectual figures to exhibit, but most of these have had their base in minority groups of privilege and wealth, a truth that may be traced from the cultural flowerings of the city-state of Athens through the centuries of medieval patronage by 'noble' families to the media monopolies of the United States, Britain and other capitalist countries today, which are able to tame and to bend to their will outstanding minds.

The Soviet intelligentsia has grown on quite a different basis, it has a different breeding-ground which is not to be found in capitalist countries and virtually the broadest base of any comparable creative sector in history.

In their continual registering of expansion, Soviet statistics that depict this achievement tend to acquire cosmic proportions and to outstrip imagination. Impressive as they are, they are best clothed in reality by a few first-hand observations.

My wife and I, in the summer of 1972, visited the Sintash collective farm located southeast of Frunze, in the Central Asian republic of Kirghizia. We arrived on an ordinary somnolent afternoon. For our talk about the farm's organisation and production, we were brought to sit in the library of the surprisingly large community centre.

My fascinated gaze kept wandering from the notes I was making on the chairman's remarks to the library itself. Its size and its packed shelves were on the scale of a branch library in London, and on the long central tables was a huge array of periodicals of every type including from foreign countries. The librarian, a middle-aged Kirghiz woman, kindly introduced us to several readers who came in as if fresh from the fields for books.

What needs to be mentioned is that that Kirghiz collective farm library is one of 360 000 libraries in the Soviet Union, one for every 2 000 people (in the United States there is one library for every 20 000 people).

After our talk in the library, we were taken around the side of the community centre to enter a quite large theatre. On its stage a rehearsal was in progress for a performance for forthcoming graduation ceremonies at the farm's secondary school. Young people, mainly ethnic Kirghiz, were rendering songs, dances and poetry declamations, and the only special arrangement made for us as visitors was a hastily presented scene from a drama. The theatre was for general use of the farm's cultural societies, and doubled as a cinema.

~ This whole building, with a complex of many facilities, was one of 133,000 community centres in the Soviet Union, of which 115,000 are to be found in the countryside on collective and state farms. The cultivation of intellectual and cultural life on a farm that the average visitor from a capitalist country would call "remote" is not unusual but, as the large statistics indicate, is the rule rather than the exception. In the large urban areas with an industrial concentration the community centres or the palaces of culture are of a more elaborate kind. We have visited institutions of this kind in many parts of the Soviet Union.

In the city of Ulyanovsk, on the Volga, at the palace of culture of the truck plant, we watched a seemingly endless parade of amateur talent. The surprising aspect of the programme by the plant's workers was the scarcity of pop music, most of the selections tending toward the classical.

The VEF radio plant in Riga has an impressive palace of culture. In its great entry hall when we were there were two exhibits of art work - of sculpture and photography. Both exhibits had items of very high quality, and we at first thought it was a

visiting exhibit of art work from all over the Latvian republic and were astonished to discover that it was all done by workers in the VEF plant Besides the rooms where sculpturing and photography were taught, there was a studio for painting and drawing and a craft room where jewelry and decorative objects were made

The VEF workers produce their own newspaper and literary journal In the palace's theatre we watched a performance by visiting dance troupe from a Latvian Baltic fishing village, which had a professional repertoir of folk dancing and ballet that was of first-rate calibre

The huge, three-storied palace of culture in the new city of Sumgait, Azerbaijan, built entirely by youth of the Komso-mol, has a great central hall, with balconied corridors from which radiate the teaching rooms for ballet dancing violin, piano, painting, drawing, sculpture, photography, wood-carving, creative writing drama and other art forms. All the studios were attended by workers and their children totally free of charge.

In Baku, at the State Opera House, we attended one of the classical Azerbaijan operas As we occupied our seats a large number of young workers from the nearby oil fields entered and sat all around us They were a bit noisy and we couldn't help but wonder what their purpose was in coming there in any city of the western world the anticipation of hooligan behaviour would be natural if a group of such appearance entered However, when the theatre darkened and the curtain went up and the operatic Azerbaijan singing began with its fascinating ululations, the young oil workers sat in utter absorption. Some leaned forward and softly sang the score in accompaniment with those on the stage, and they enthusiastically applauded the arias. Those young oil workers knew the classical opera by heart and had come there with keen appreciation of it No capitalist country can boast of having put the arts within the reach of the people on such a mass scale

At the open-air theatre named after Chekhov in the Crimean city of Yalta we attended a performance one evening by the Uzbek dramatic dancer, Tursunbaev At the conclusion of the performance he came out to take his bows to applause, and we thought that was the end of it Besides, it had begun to rain

rather heavily and the audience was getting wet. Instead, Tursunbaev launched into what turned out to be an hour's lecture on his art and his plans for future performances, with the audience calling out questions to him on his dancing and his technique, which he answered. The audience remained under umbrellas and raincoats, or without, to carry on that late-hour dialogue with a favourite artist who was obviously pleased to talk to them.

The Gorki Park of Culture and Rest in Moscow is a place that we never tire of visiting. A weekend summer afternoon in that park provides a most interesting insight into features of intellectual activity that are quite ordinary in Soviet life. Besides the facilities for amusement, exercise and refreshment, there are innumerable open-air theatres where amateur artists and drama groups perform and where lectures are given. We have been fascinated by the packed attendance in large open-air auditoriums, listening to lectures on the current international situation, on economic developments in Africa, or on the latest books. In one such theatre we sat amid an audience of varied social standing listening intently to an academic lecture on political economy.

This rarely occurs in the capitalist countries. Among the Soviet people, however, this striving after intellectual and cultural rather than material values is very common.

#### THE SOVIET MASS CULTURE

It would be absurd to try to assert that every single Soviet citizen has a high level of intellectual interest and of artistic appreciation. One thing is certain, however: the mass cultural and general intellectual interest levels are far higher on average in the Soviet Union than in any advanced capitalist country. This is the conclusion I have come to as a result of my observations of many years.

There are a number of ways of measuring this. One is the reading activity of the population. In the Soviet Union 80 000 book titles are published per year, in a total of 1 800 000,000 copies annually. It has produced the most reading nation in the world and the UNESCO statistics prove it. A visitor to any

corner of the country is impressed at once by the public sight of people reading with innumerable books open on park benches, on public transport, in restaurants, in queues, on the desks of hotel clerks, in the hands of lift operators or of drivers, on countless laps of all ages waiting in train stations and air terminals

To a survey question, "What is your favourite pursuit when free from work and domestic chores?" 70 per cent answered, 'Reading' There is a certain amount of light romantic fiction published, that may occupy some of these readers, but nowhere is there found any of that ocean of cheap paperback novels—of crime, pornography, violence, sensational adventure or spy thrillers—that oozes from shops and kiosks in the United States and Britain This sort of hack writing "entertains" the readers but drains them emotionally, whereas the commercial appeal of these books plays into the hands of the dealers and the entire ruling class. The scanty intellectual diet makes it possible to keep the people's spiritual life under control

I recall walking down Gorki Street in Moscow and seeing a street stall being set up, with boxed books unloaded from a van and arrayed upon it At once a crowd of passersby assembled and began to buy the volumes as fast as the woman seller could handle the money I walked over to see what sensational item was attracting attention. It was an edition fresh off the presses of a Russian translation of the German classical 19th-century dramatist Friedrich Schiller. The idea of a volume of Schiller selling like hot-cakes in a street in New York or London was unthinkable

The amount of books sold and read is still not a sufficient measure of intellectual life, the nature of the books is a more accurate gauge It is common for huge Soviet editions in the tens of thousands, of poetry and other creative literature, to be grabbed up on the day of publication by crowds of people who wait in queues for bookshops to open It is always amazing and makes me think of the publication of leading British contemporary poets. A publishers' meeting in Britain in November 1975 made the admission that they are published in small editions of 1,000 copies or less, and that it is difficult to sell even these over an extended period of time.

Similar criteria apply in the case of the mass circulation of newspapers and magazines. In the capitalist countries there are mass circulation newspapers, but those that reach sales of millions obtain their readers through tawdry sensationalism, with a garish emphasis on sex and gruesome crime, like *News of the World*, *The People*, the *Mirror* and *The Express* in Britain. The so-called "quality" newspapers—London's *The Times* or *The Guardian*, *The New York Times*, France's *Le Monde*—have circulations of a very few hundred thousand, with Sunday editions or special Sunday "weeklies" that include a magazine supplement sometimes approaching a million copies.

There are no newspapers that deal in sensationalism or pornography in the Soviet Union. The Soviet press, as a whole, is distinguished by sober, serious journalism that is instructive as well as informative, probing to the meaning and significance of events. The central newspapers have circulations of millions of copies. My work as a political journalist has given me a high appreciation of Soviet journalism which as a rule goes to the heart of a matter, deals with essential facts, objectively and does not trivialise the news, the people it concerns, or their attitudes and emotions. It does not talk down to its readers or appeal to prejudices or fears.

These standards of journalism are true not just for the leading journals but for Soviet periodicals as a general rule. The mass readership they have is an indication of the cultural level of the population. An interesting example of this is the type of periodical known as the "women's magazine". In the leading capitalist countries the women's magazines, of which there are many but all of a similar pattern, are regarded as "lightweight" publications that cater to not very important interests—romantic stories, cooking, dressmaking, beauty care. In comparison, the widely-read Soviet magazine, *Rabotnitsa* (Working Woman), which has the enormous circulation of 13 million, devotes no more than two or three pages to cooking and fashion, and is devoted chiefly to serious articles on women's contributions to socialist society or to liberation movements, women's organisations' activities in different countries and world peace, with literary and art sections in addition. Such a publication, undoubtedly, can contribute to the readers' education.

Most of the Soviet families subscribe to newspapers and periodicals. By 1975 there were 97 per cent of city families subscribing to newspapers and magazines and 92 per cent of rural families. Of these, over half of city families and 30 per cent of rural families subscribed to three or more newspapers and magazines. For newspapers alone there is a daily readership by 82 per cent of all Soviet citizens.

In recent years the expansion of the scientific intelligentsia has been accompanied by a growing mass circulation of scientific journals, which are increasing in number. The way in which readership of these has grown is illustrated by the monthly *Mirovaya ekonomika i mezhdunarodniye otnoshenia* (World Economics and International Relations) which rose from 38,000 in 1969 to 46,000 in 1975. Every time I come to the Soviet Union I find that a number of new interesting journals on various fields of knowledge have made their appearance.

The cultural revolution in the Soviet Union opened doors to much wider intellectual life. All the forms of culture or cultural expression have heavy participation which is probably unmatched in any other country.

There were, for example, 600,000 amateur art groups formed by 1976 with the membership of over 16 000,000 adults and 10 000 000 children.

In 1976 there were 573 professional theatres in the Soviet Union of which an unprecedented number of 150 were for children. These drew an audience in that year of 117 million people.

Unlike the theatres of New York, London or other capitalist cities (it is even more severely pronounced in Manila) where both the cultural climate and price of admission limit attendance for the most part to those of higher income a circumstance most notable in the case of ballet and opera, all Soviet theatre audiences are broad cross-sections of the population, the worker in the open-necked shirt sitting beside the cravatted university professor or academician the old peasant woman the army officer, students housewives and schoolchildren.

Music is as widely appreciated and it is not only due to a large number of symphony orchestras and philharmonic societies I have been impressed by the virtuosity of the performers.

and the atmosphere of mass musical culture. Besides, the amateur music groups attended by numerous music lovers are also displaying great performing mastery.

Most of the performing groups travel about to give performances and present exhibitions at industrial plants, palaces of culture, farms and remote herd camps or construction projects like the tremendous Baikal-Amur (BAM) railroad being driven across unopened Siberian territories and the most remote areas.

Mass intellectual interests and the striving after a higher cultural level of the people are truly inexhaustible and, in my opinion, the Soviet people can by rights be spoken of as among the world's most cultured and educated.

The spread of a mass culture, the steady raising of the compulsory education period, and the expansion of intellectual life have caused great strides to be made toward minimising the difference between physical and mental labour. It is no longer possible to sharply categorise Soviet intellectuals. Anti-Soviet propaganda that presumes to cause disaffection among Soviet intellectuals is therefore ill-conceived in more ways than one. Soviet workers in culture, who are dedicated professionals and patriots of their homeland, are building communism together with the rest of the people, their mission being both responsible and lofty.

#### THE TRUTH ABOUT SOVIET WRITERS

Writers make up only a fraction of the intelligentsia in the Soviet Union, but they have been made the most publicised of Soviet intellectuals. Curiously, however, although capitalist propaganda has singled out Soviet writers as a favourite sector in attacking or trying to subvert socialism, most people in the capitalist countries have been kept in ignorance about the majority of Soviet writers and about the literature they have been producing.

Bourgeois ideologists are seeking to find such statements in Soviet writings that can be picked up by the media for anti-Soviet purposes, whereas favourable accounts are not mentioned.

or given attention This is the way they interpret freedom of information and of exchange of ideas

Capitalist ideologists try hard to show that capitalist culture is founded on the principle that a writer has the inalienable right to say whatever he wants to say, to write whatever he wants in any way that he wants, to have whatever he writes published, and to be accorded homage even when his ideas conflict with those of the ruling sectors The Soviet Union doesn't observe this principle, it is said, and therefore it has no freedom of expression as allegedly exists under capitalism

If I were not a writer myself, I would perhaps be misled by these assertions There has always been a misty aura of sanctity about the phrase "freedom of expression," but in fact such a freedom is curtailed in an infinite number of ways in the capitalist world, beginning with the ownership of virtually all media by big business Everything becomes subordinated to monopoly interests, and the business world has always been notorious for its spiritual bareness and its antipathy to intellectualism.

When I was quite young I was dreamily impressed by the declaration of P B Shelley that "poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world" One would think from anti-Soviet propaganda in circulation that this idealistic and essentially rather pompous assertion is a living principle of capitalist civilisation. The handful of former Soviet writers, who have contradicted socialist society, for example, have been presented and praised in the capitalist media as if they were the irreproachable flower of the nation and society, each transformed into the "conscience of his people" This is as far from the truth as the Moon is from the Earth, just one enemy of the Soviet Union praising another

In the course of trying to become a writer, I learned the actual nature of the capitalist attitude toward writers and learned about the capitalist literary market and about who legislated the conditions of my earning a livelihood in it There are definite, and I should say rather stringent, literary laws that have to be acknowledged and conformed to if a writer intellectual wants to win well-paid acclaim under capitalism By no stretch of the wildest imagination do they include any recognition that a writer can stand apart from or in contradiction to the society ruled by

capital. "Independent" views, "self-expression" and "freedom of spirit" are not welcome in the literary market-place. In actual fact writers under capitalism (with the exception of the staunchest ones) are forced to conform in the society where the size of bank account determines one's status, privileges and success in life.

A writer known to have Marxist sympathies will find nothing but closed doors in capitalist publishing houses. Such is "freedom of expression" in practice.

People throughout the world who work and fight for socialism do so with the conscious aim of eradicating the socially harmful, immoral or unhealthy ideas and anti-Communist prejudices that prevail under capitalism, and of building a society of lofty ideals of human relationships. The writer is called upon to take a constructive part in building such a society and in the ideological education of his compatriots.

Because of their creative labour occurring in a public way, laid out on the printed page or on stage and screen, Soviet writers and their processes of development have been more evident than most other sectors of the country's intelligentsia. The development was accompanied by controversy, which was not strange in a pioneering socialist society, finding its way along new paths of culture. At the outset, in 1917, there were numerous "schools" and sects of writers, some of them not much in tune with the revolutionary forces, each with its own concept of how literature and the writer should function in the new circumstances. Editorial offices and literary gatherings were forums of hot debate. These have been described in the memoirs of Soviet writers like Konstantin Paustovsky. It took some time before progressive ideas on the role of the writer and forms of an organised literary life were worked out.

Soviet writers have always been among the most passionate defenders and inspirers of socialist society. They have sought to portray a new society in the making, and the builders of it. Many of those who began to produce novels, poetry and dramas in the 1920s and early 1930s had passed through the cauldron of the Civil War and had had a direct hand in the revolutionary process, including Alexander Fadeyev, Nikolai Ostrovsky, Dmitry Furmanov. Others, like Vladimir Mayakovsky and Alex-

ander Blok had begun to write before the Revolution and proclaimed their commitment to its aims eloquently. Still others—Alexei Tolstoy, Ilya Ehrenburg, Konstantin Fedin—found themselves abroad for a time but returned, drawn by the desire to participate in the creative, intellectual life of the country.

As in the case of all the Soviet intelligentsia, writers consider themselves responsible for their homeland and for the development of literature on the principles of socialist realism.

'We always remember that literature is called upon to carry high humanistic ideals and to be a life-giving source,' has said Georgi Markov, the First Secretary of the Board of the USSR Writers Union, 'drawing on which people are inspired to fight for social progress, advance, and become kinder and nobler, while learning to hate violence and arbitrary rule—everything that is connected with reactionary aims and military motives.'

Realism, the literary method of critically examining society on the basis of things and people as they actually are, is employed widely in modern literature.

Socialist realism establishes a very definite viewpoint and concept of life and society, and their aims. Its chief requirement is to show the truth of life in its revolutionary development, by which is meant that while showing all the many contradictions in life, artistry and emphasis should be focused on the phenomena, the processes and the characters that best indicate progressive development in society.

Socialist realism as a literary method is invariably optimistic, positive and humane.

'All of this has to do with the purpose of artistic activity and creative endeavour in socialist society. The Novosti Press Agency publication, "The USSR Questions and Answers, 1967," states 'The content and value of true art is in everything that helps human individuality to grow, broadens its horizons, inspires it with lofty ideas, uplifts it morally, and intellectually, cultivates an aesthetic perception of the world ... all that develops the personality, promotes an independent and active attitude to life.'"

Few could disagree that these are worthwhile and desirable

aims. In the Soviet Union this statement of artistic purpose is not merely given lip service but is implemented in an organised way, particularly through the activity of the Soviet Writers' Union

## A LITERATURE OF CREATION

There is no organisation of writers in any capitalist country that is comparable to the unique Union of Soviet Writers. Prior to the formation of a single Union of Writers a variety of small writers groups and societies existed in the Soviet Union, along with many individual writers who worked on their own. Maxim Gorki had an important part to play in the establishment of the Union acting as chairman of the organising committee that sent out writer teams all over the country to meet writers, to find who was actually writing, and to bring their best representatives together in a founding Congress.

The 1st Soviet Writers' Congress was held in Moscow on August 17-September 2, 1934. It was attended by 600 writer-delegates, from 54 nationalities. Their average age was 36 years, but most of them had had literary experience.

Maxim Gorki, in his opening address, pointed out that Soviet literature must be a mighty weapon of socialist culture.

The most momentous feature was that after the Congress the literatures of the diverse Soviet nationalities, many of which are small in numbers and gained a written language only as a result of the October Revolution, advanced enormously.

A major concentration was on the translation of writers from all the nationalities. Today in the Soviet Union no one thinks of this as being unique or new. Soviet literature now is like a rich tapestry in which the diverse national literatures are interwoven, and a poet or novelist from a small autonomous region thousands of miles from Moscow can become known and read almost at once in many languages, if he is talented of course.

When I visited Latvia, I had some illuminating talks with writers in Riga. They pointed out to me the significance

of their works being published in other languages of the country Vilis Lacs, the eminent Latvian novelist, had had one million copies of his various works published in his own language in Latvia (population 25 million), but they had been published in 12 million copies in the other main languages of the Soviet Union, not to mention the translations into foreign languages.

It was the Soviet Writers Union that made such a literature of diversity, rooted in the common method of socialist realism, possible. It has acted as a conscious force to bring young writers forward, to make them part of the great multi-national Soviet community, to guide them in their development, and to mold them as creative cultural influences in the construction of socialism. \*

Since 1934 six congresses of the Union of Soviet Writers have been held. Beginning with 1,500 members in 1934, the Union had grown to 7,900 members by 1976

Prose writers, poets, playwrights, scenario writers, critics or translators may become members of the Writers' Union who, as the Union's Charter reads, by their creative endeavours are taking an active part in building communist society. This presupposes the assertion of the ideas of Soviet patriotism and internationalism and an opposition to alien influences. Each writer has the right to lay bare the real contradictions and conflicts, facilitating the victory of what is new and progressive. It is a policy that is maintained consistently.

The Union of Soviet Writers strives to help mould a committed socialist intelligentsia.

In a country of constantly expanding cultural expression, there are many times more Soviet writers who attain publication than the 7,900 members of the Union. However, as the Union's Charter states, Books, plays, scenarios, translations or works of literary criticism which have been published and are of artistic or of literary-research value are required for the admission of an author to the Union. As a rule, at least three such published works are required. In addition, an applicant for membership needs to have the recommendation of three Union members.

Creative and intellectual standards are maintained by these membership requirements, but they do not in any way imply an exclusiveness or a coterie tendency as exists in many organisations of writers in capitalist parts of the world

Young writers have easy access to established authors, for advice, and the Union holds frequent seminars for new writers and their problems of creation

All-Union conferences of young writers, conducted with the guidance of the Union, are held regularly. The first was in 1947, and the sixth took place in Moscow in 1975, the latter was attended by 337 youthful writers, most of them non-professional beginners working in factories or on collective and state farms. At the sixth conference, 180 well-known Soviet writers, Union members, met with the youthful aspirants in varied seminars and consultation sessions, giving advice and criticising work they had done. A number of the leading poets and prose writers in the Soviet Union today received their initial helping hand at the earlier young writers' conferences. The Union's daily work is varied.

'In the past few years,' N T Fedorenko, corresponding member of the USSR Academy of Sciences and secretary of the Union, told me when I met him, 'the Union and its branches have participated in over 70 'Days of Culture,' 'Weeks of Literature,' Ten-Day Festivals of Literature and other events in which our writers have been present to discuss their work and the problems of the people who come to them'

During a visit to Kirghizia, my wife and I met Chinghis Aitmatov, one of the outstanding Soviet writers. He told us of the origins of his writing in the life of the people whom he knew in the intimacy of work

'I would trace my beginnings as a writer back to my early days in a village, 400 kilometres from Frunze. There, during my childhood, my grandmother imbued me with a great respect for folk tales and for the spoken epics of the Kirghiz bards who were not able to read or write.'

That was one of the factors that led to my acquaintance with the real life of the people. The other factor was the Great Patriotic War, when most of the able-bodied men from our village joined the Red Army to fight the fascist invader. Youth of my

age then, 14 or 15, assumed the burden of work on the collective farms or of running the affairs of the village

"At the age of 14 I was secretary of the local village Soviet. Then I became a collector of military taxes, taxes for the support of our Army. I think the hardest job in the world is collecting taxes, especially the way it was then, from our peasants who were already sacrificing to defeat the invader. Our peasants today do not pay any taxes to the state. But during the war it was impossible to avoid it. But I learned much of the spirit of the people. I remember each one of the many who gave their last crust of bread to the Red Army fund.

"After the war I began to study seriously. I graduated from an agricultural institute as a zoological technician, what you might call an engineer of cattle breeding and that was my work for some time. When I was in Holland as a member of a Soviet parliamentary delegation, we visited a Dutch cattle-breeding farm. The Dutch farmers were astonished to learn that a Soviet writer should have such a down-to-earth knowledge of cattle.

"My first stories were published in 1952, written in intervals between farm work. As I now see it, they were not of any value, being stories that were imitations of other stories. I had to develop as a man as well as a writer before any stories of mine were my own."

Chinghis Aitmatov might still be a cattle breeder, writing spare time stories, if it were not for the Union of Soviet Writers. The Union brought Aitmatov to Moscow and found a place for him in the Gorki Institute of World Literature, giving him every opportunity to develop his craft as a writer.

Aitmatov's life story as a writer is not unusual. A continual search is conducted by Writers' Union branches for new and young writers. Eduard Torchian, first secretary of the Writers' Union in the Armenian republic, said "Young writers? We have many times more of them than the 290 members of our Union."

I remember meeting Boris Polevoi, a leading writer, in the editorial offices of *Yunost* (Youth) magazine, of which he was editor-in-chief. Most of the *Yunost* staff members were quite

young Polevoi, however, is from the older generation, and I was further interested to learn that *Yunost* had been founded in the mid-1950s by Valentin Katayev, the veteran novelist and a founding member of the Writers' Union, precisely to provide a vehicle for young writers. Polevoi described himself to me as "an old grandmother invited to chaperon a students' affair while the students are singing and having a good time, the old grandmother sits knitting, the parents are quiet because they know the grandmother is there with the students."

At the time I was there the ebullient Polevoi, who resembled no grandmother I had ever met, and his youthful staff were filled with enthusiasm over a new manuscript that had reached them, by a worker, a non-professional writer, who related his experiences in industrial construction Half the material in *Yunost* was by non-professional writers, and some of them, said Polevoi, wrote better than qualified members of the Writers' Union. He meant no slur on the Union, but was stressing the fact that writing was widely spread among the people of the country. The non-member is absolutely the same as a Union member as far as publishing houses and periodicals are concerned.

Membership, however, has important advantages. One of these is the right to benefit from the Union's Literary Fund (financial, medical and communal services). No organisation in the capitalist countries has the semblance of the Literary Fund which has nothing to do with Western philanthropy.

It is designed to provide desirable facilities for writing, particularly for writers who need financial help to work on or complete a book or other major project. The writer without regular salary might find himself in a difficult situation. The Fund's assistance is something like an advance which does not necessarily have to be repaid.

The Writers' Union has its own publishing house and its own weekly newspaper, *Literaturnaya Gazeta* (Literary Gazette), and publishes four magazines. The capitalist press that at times is fond of playing up *Novy Mir* as an allegedly 'liberal' journal that supposedly conflicts with *Oktyabr* as an allegedly 'conservative' journal in Soviet intellectual life fails to point out that both are published by the Writers' Union and governed by the Charter of the Union, each has its own style.

An ideological as well as cultural role is played by *Literaturnaya Gazeta*. In comparison with the *New York Times Book Review* or the *London Times Literary Supplement* it is a far more lively and stimulating periodical, with a "face" of its own, and a measure of Soviet intellectual life is provided by the fact that usually it is virtually impossible to obtain a copy of *Literaturnaya Gazeta* within hours after publication.

The *Literaturnaya Gazeta* is instrumental in implementing the goals set for Soviet literature and for Soviet writers by the Communist Party. Naturally the press in the Soviet Union is ideologically motivated. Nikolai Fedorenko told me most definitely: "The Writers' Union is a public organisation with the same ideology as the Soviet people have. It is a part of Soviet society, an integral part of the Party and people."

A relatively high percentage of the Union's members are Communists and their influence can hardly be overestimated. But many writers are not party members with no consequences for their social status. For example, the former Writers' Union president, the late Konstantin Fedin, was not a Party member, nor is the oldest author, Leonid Leonov, one of the leading secretaries of the executive board.

Many writers play a public role at factories, offices and organisations, which is an unheard-of thing in the capitalist countries. Frequently they go to construction projects or to factories or to farms, to bring culture within the people's reach and also to understand and to write about the problems and creative labour of the people. Nothing of the kind happens in the West.

It has become a rule that many Soviet writers have permanent contacts with industrial plants, collective farms, or military units, meet regularly with the workers, peasants or soldiers, and have a genuinely creative relationship with them.

The social role of the writers of both poetry and prose in the Soviet Union is not at all that of Shelley's "unacknowledged legislators" nor that of the great social critics in literature under capitalism who allegedly acquire a status of "conscience of the nation." In both such latter cases the writer assumes the stance of a lonely individual dissociating himself from the society and its evils around him and 'exposing' it.

Soviet writers do not wear a mantle of intellectual exceptionalism, nor do they have to peddle their wares in a literary market that judges their worth by the money-making saleability of the product. They are members of a collective society in which the fee they receive is just a material expression of literary value. Good literature gains publication and recognition if, as the Charter of the Writers' Union states, it has 'inseverable bonds with the life of the people'

They are not exceptional in their creative activity in a society that hails worker, peasant and intellectual alike as creative builders of socialism. Soviet writers are not 'bored individuals' but are active participants in mass activity and in planned socialist growth.

P B Shelley may be right in one respect: many Soviet writers are certainly legislators, as members of the Supreme Soviet or of the Soviet of the republic from which they come, elected by the people who highly appreciate their contribution to Soviet culture.

The tiny few of Soviet writers who, in violation of the Union's Charter, have stood apart from the collective life and principles of Soviet society, have been acclaimed by capitalist propagandists Solzhenitsyn, Sinyavsky, Daniel, A Kuznetsov, far from being the conscience of the people as they were thus acclaimed in such anti-Soviet propaganda, isolated themselves from the people and from the society the Soviet people are building.

The Western reading public still hardly knows the names of such splendid modern Russian prose writers as Shukshin, Mozhayev, Bogomolov, Rasputin, Abramov, Tendryakov and Astafiev, to name only a few. All that is needed for their works to be published in the West is good will. However, the publishers there are avid for scandals and sensationalism. Because of their political bias they are not interested in offering their readers the best of the Soviet writings.

The moral censure of "dissidents," who have never gained recognition among the Soviet people, has shown that they are strangers in this country interfering with its work for its future. They have no grounds for being hurt by the attitudes toward those dissenting. They themselves did everything they could to

place themselves outside society and to become outcasts Their writings which slander and denigrate their homeland and distort its practices have nothing to do with literature

The working people have too much on their hands to pay excessive attention to those standing in their way and hindering their progress.

The truly close relationship of affection between the Soviet people and the vast majority of their creative intellectuals, are indications of the existence of a genuine people's literature and people's culture

There is another aspect of the distorted impressions nurtured among people in capitalist countries about Soviet literature and writers Soviet writers and intellectuals in general are purportedly insulated from ideas and creation in the rest of the world This is as remote from the truth as it is possible to get

Soviet writers, as I know from personal acquaintance are many times better informed about literary and other cultural activity in the capitalist part of the world than writers living under capitalism are about socialist literature and its creators.

In part this is due to the very extensive publication of foreign literature in the Soviet Union which leads the world in translations In 1974 there were over 3,000 works of foreign authors published in the Soviet Union—to be specific 522 French 325 from the United States 316 British 131 Italian, over 500 from Asia, Latin America and Africa, 1 200 from the various socialist countries Virtually all writers of prominence and literary worth were included Of US writers alone 750 titles were published in 1972, in 51 million copies, and in 1973, 900 titles in 53 million copies

The Writers' Union itself publishes the immensely popular *Inostrannaya Literatura* (Foreign Literature) magazine, of which N T Fedorenko is editor-in-chief There is nothing like it in any capitalist country It has a monthly circulation of around 700 000 Two other magazines are devoted to foreign literature *Vsesvit* (in Ukrainian) and *Looming* (in Estonian)

Soviet writers have extensive contacts with writers and other people in almost all countries. Hundreds of foreign writers are

invited to visit the Soviet Union every year and are able to meet freely with their Soviet counterparts, and a great many Soviet writers go abroad, either on their own or through cultural or friendship exchanges. International writers meetings often occur in the Soviet Union, such as the regular Afro-Asian Writers' Conference.

Visiting foreign writers receive an enormous amount of attention in the Soviet Union wherever they go, and many have been surprised to find readers quite familiar with their writings, an experience not often encountered in their own countries.

In the contacts that I have had, I have been chiefly impressed by the lively interest writers, workers in art and journalists have shown in almost everything under the sun and by the amount of argumentative discussion that goes on amongst them.

The Western press never mentions such facts it is only aroused by the least sign of 'scandal' or whenever it smells 'party pressure' in one literary phenomenon or another. Then it quickly cooks a 'dish' full of distortions and inventions to satisfy the anti-Soviet tastes.

Any impression or insinuation that Soviet writers are not free to write as they please or to create authentic literature is baseless and malicious. Far from being a literature full of wooden commissars and idealised workers, it is infinitely varied in form, style and subject matter, and made especially rich by its multi-national character that brings the literary creation of 120 large and small nationalities into the common province of the Soviet people.

In the attempt by capitalist propaganda to depict Soviet literature as 'regimented' and 'unfree,' there is a conspiracy of misrepresentation that paints Soviet writing as grey and colourless, supposedly reflecting a life of dullness and repression.

Prior to the first Writers' Congress, Soviet literature had produced such vivid and exciting writing as the epic D<sup>on</sup> novels of Mikhail Sholokhov, the novels of the Revolution and Civil War by Alexander Fadeyev, Nikolai Ostrovsky, Alexander Serafimovich, and many others, the strong new rhythms of Vladimir

Mayakovsky's poetry, and the ringing celebration of Soviet land and people in the poetry of Nikolai Tikhonov

Collectivisation, industrialisation the mighty war effort to defeat fascist invasion, post-war reconstruction and advance that literally vaulted Soviet man to the skies and stars, the enrichment of life in an advanced socialist society—each has produced an array of talent and individual expression

It is a literature, too, that is constantly looking ahead with optimism, with its focus on what is new and developing Nikolai Tikhonov, who may be called the "grand old man" of Soviet poetry, gave his vivid and exact attitude toward literary work. He wrote in 1972

'How do I see the future of our great multi-national literature?

'Great events change the psychology of the people. The war, for instance, gave birth to a new generation of prose writers and poets, different from those whose spiritual make-up had been shaped in peace Radical changes in life doubtlessly have their effect on people and consequently on literature. The scientific and technical revolution, space exploration interplanetary travel—all this is changing the current reality. Literature should follow the changes in life closely'

In the more recent years, as the great sweep and vast panorama of the struggle and construction decades have given way to the consolidation and deepening of Soviet life Soviet writers have given increasing attention to human relationships under real socialism It does not mean that the epic of construction has dwindled the great construction effort to drive the BAM—Baikal to Amur railroad—through Siberian wilderness and all the other enormous projects that are opening up the Siberian lands are certainly shaping as literature in the minds of the thousands of youth engaged in that labour today

Invigorating humane and expressive Soviet literature exists, thrives and advances despite the lies disseminated by class antagonists The peoples of the world will increasingly discover it and greatly benefit from it as the capitalist walls that hide it are torn away

## WHEN ART BELONGS TO THE PEOPLE

The conscious development of a socialist literature, with its themes of humanism, brotherhood and the constructive efforts of people has been duplicated in the attention given to all the other arts in the Soviet Union. In painting, music, cinema, the drama theatre and dance there is the same stress on linking intellectual output with the aspirations of the society, keeping art forms and artistic expression close to the people and how they live and feel.

Painting in the Soviet Union has been misrepresented and maligned abroad in the capitalist press to perhaps an even greater extent than Soviet writing. This has occurred chiefly because the method of socialist realism when applied in painting and other graphic arts discourages and runs counter to the abstract art that has been a dominant feature of this area of expression for decades in the capitalist countries.

The debate between abstract art and artistic realism has an important bearing on the intellectual attitude and social outlook of both its practitioners and those who view their works. In esoteric capitalist cultural circles the abstract artist is acclaimed for his individuality, for giving self-expression to a private inner world that has meaning essentially to himself and, despite theories of interpretation, remains incomprehensible to art lovers.

Soviet art theories have aroused the ire of capitalist critics because they insist that valid art should deal with the real world and that the link of communication understood beauty and comprehended emotion should exist between the artist and his viewers. Capitalist culture encourages abstraction precisely because it diverts intellectual activity from reality and from the social impact of realistic art.

As in the case of literature, socialist realism in painting has produced remarkable works of art. It is wholly untrue and ridiculous to say that Soviet painting consists of huge canvases of tractors, plants and of Communist organisers exhorting workers or of sports parades, etc. Thousands of individual talents and

styles are to be found in galleries all over the Soviet Union, depicting the Soviet land and people in infinitely varied imaginative forms. These beautiful works of great aesthetic culture are executed in a realistic manner.

Nor is it true that "modern art" and experimentalism are absent from Soviet painting. I am not referring to the handful of cheap imitators of capitalist abstractionism and "pop art" that foreign journalists have tried to publicise but who have never won a response from the Soviet people as a whole. It is significant that when an exhibition of such works by Soviet "emigre dissidents" was held in London in 1977 it was given scornful treatment by British art critics for its pathetic imitations of capitalist art fads and for the embarrassing lack of talent it displayed after all the publicity given to such artists by anti-Soviet propaganda.

Painting of an experimental type may be found in a number of art galleries. While visiting the Armenian republic, my wife and I found a large Museum of Modern Art in the city of Yerevan, which included many abstract studies that were quite original.

The significant fact about Soviet painting is that it has become a mass art form, along with every other form of cultural expression. There were 7 200 000 amateur artists in 1957, and these had increased to 8 700 000 a decade later, in 1967, and the figure is constantly growing. A visit to factory community centres shows the enormous number of factory and office workers going in for amateur painting. As a rule, classes there are conducted by well-known professionals, which is unthinkable in the West.

A unique richness has been given to Soviet painting by its multi-national aspect, paralleling the richness of the multi-national Soviet literature. Each republic has its own distinctive styles and motifs, from the bright warmly-coloured landscapes of the south as in the works of the Armenian, M. Saryan, to the cooler tones of the snow and birch regions of the Russian Federation or of Byelorussia or the Baltic republics. My wife and I always seek out the art galleries in each republic and look for the many reproduction folders or printed collections of painters which are abundantly and inexpensively produced in the Soviet Union.

We have been fascinated by the fact that art work is not confined to the galleries. One of our pleasures in travelling about the various republics has been in observing the bus stop shelters along country roads or in small towns these are not only constructed in different ways but each is decorated with its own vivid mural or mosaic. It is a feature to be found also on the walls of many buildings in the cities. Thus overflowing of art into the streets and roadsides provides a wholly different kind of intellectual stimulation than does the mass of garish and tasteless advertising on billboards in the United States, or on hoardings in Britain.

Professional painters and other graphic artists belong to the Soviet Artists Union, which looks after the interests of artists in a way similar to the role played by the Writers Union. The Artists Union has 14,000 members and branches in all republics, territories and regions, and large cities. Painters may be assisted in exhibiting their work by the Union, which also aids in the obtaining of commissions with enterprises, organisations, government departments, or publishing houses (Soviet books, particularly creative literature, widely use delightful brush or pen illustrations, a pleasant feature that virtually disappeared from books in capitalist countries decades ago)

The Artists' Union enables its members to travel abroad or about the Soviet Union at the Union's expense, paying for trips and sojourns at construction projects, factories, state and collective farms, for depicting the work being done.

An Artistic Fund, which operates in much the same way as the Literary Fund of the Writers' Union, provides the money necessary for the artists' fruitful work. What impressed us most of all was the "houses of creative work" for the Union members.

The state as well as the Artists' Union provides facilities for artists. On October 19, 1976, for example, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union adopted a resolution that, as the Soviet press reported, 'recommends improving the activity connected with the holding of exhibitions for more broadly displaying young artists' works. For this purpose, it is envisaged to make available additional exhibition premises and to expand the construction of studios for artists in the coun-

try's large cities" This concern for young talented artists can hardly be overestimated, especially if we take into consideration the fact that nothing of the kind is to be found in the capitalist world. Such are 'the Party directives' that the anti-Sovieteers are so wont to ridicule. They only do good to the people and there is nothing wrong with them.

A visit to a gallery exhibition of either professional or amateur art in the Soviet Union is impressive not only for the range and calibre of the work done but also for leafing through the guest-book of commentary that may be found at such displays. The degree of artistic appreciation and judgment, seriously expressed by the ordinary citizen, is impressive in itself. There is, in fact, an enormous interest in art, the product of the development of a mass culture and of a mass intelligentsia. The interest naturally extends to the art of foreign countries. There is seldom a time when an exhibition of a foreign artist is not touring the Soviet cities. From my own experience I can say that some exhibitions draw enormous, queued crowds of viewers.

Soviet music and the socialist manner of its cultivation, have received nearly as much misrepresentation in capitalist media as have Soviet painting and other arts. Composition and performance, it is said, are dictated, and musical expression kept in strait jacket. However, Soviet music, by the sheer power and versatility of both its composers and musicians, has burst through the malicious propaganda and had become well-known and loved throughout the world. If music, in Shakespeare's words, has charms to soothe the savage beast, it can also overpower and tame the most savage anti-Soviet distortion.

It is not at all surprising that Soviet musical performers have gained an international status that is virtually supremacy: they represent a society in which musical instruction and training are made available on a mass scale. For the most talented there are dozens of outstanding schools of music.

A number of Soviet composers are regularly included in the concert programs of Western Europe and the United States. Dmitri Shostakovich, Sergei Prokofiev, Aram Khachaturian, Dmitri Kabalevsky and Rodion Shchedrin. These, however, are but a few of the many Soviet composers, the great majority of whom are not introduced to capitalist concert halls. The notorious Red

'menace' is found by the anti-Sovieters even in music, leading at times to absurdities. For instance, in Britain a theme from Aram Khachaturian's *Spartacus* was 'lifted' for use as the theme music in a British television 'soap opera' series about a 19th century shipping line. This series ran for several years, but for almost the entire time no credit was even given to Khachaturian in the film's credit lines. The music became popularly known as the Onedin Line theme (after the name of the fictional shipping line) and viewers who loved it all over Britain accepted it as British. When visiting Bolshoi Theatre dancers performed '*Spartacus*' finally in Britain in 1974, there were many who thought that Khachaturian had "lifted" British music. Such are the practices of Western music "dealers."

The same 'mistake' would be inconceivable in the Soviet Union, where interest in music is of an international character and where visiting foreign composers and musicians are greeted by tremendous audiences. Visiting performers like a John Ogden or a Van Cliburn become known throughout the country, to a degree not experienced by these artists in their own countries. There are cases like that of Alan Bush, the British composer, who has had great difficulty in having his operas or chamber music performed in Britain, because he is a Communist, but who is highly esteemed and well-known by Soviet people.

Soviet music, with its realistic traditions, serves the people and the aims of socialist society. The sharp controversies that have at times accompanied the development of Soviet music, and that have been seized upon for distorted reporting in the capitalist press, are actually an indication of the high level of musical education and consciousness that socialism has brought to the Soviet people. All things considered, there has probably been more discussion and debate on musical questions, on form and content of composition, and on the relation of composer to audience, in the Soviet Union than in any other country.

Capitalist propaganda gives one the impression that the criterion for maturity of musical appreciation in the Soviet Union is whether or not western-style pop music is accepted and played. It happens that popular music from authentic jazz to the beat variety is indeed played to audiences in the Soviet Union. If the

more anarchic forms of western popular music, including the vulgar and obscene, are discouraged, it is not at all surprising Discriminating music lovers in capitalist countries are also critical of the 'way out' type of performances. It can be gathered from the strident emphasis given to the effort to introduce pop music into the Soviet Union by capitalist agencies (through broadcasting programs in particular) that the aim is precisely to corrupt musical appreciation and particularly youthful attitudes and behaviour

In capitalist countries, unfortunately, pop music groups and their following have been associated with drug habits and immorality, and it is not difficult to conclude that this is a consequence hoped for by the capitalist Pied Pipers of pop music.

The climate in the Soviet musical community is healthy and productive, for which much credit is due to the Union of Soviet Composers. It helps to shape the character of Soviet music and provides composers with every assistance in the work of creation. It continually searches for and nurtures youthful composing talent and provides a collective forum for new work to be presented analysed and critically aided. In comparison, the creative musical intellectuals in capitalist countries develop and work almost in isolation.

The Composers' Union also includes musicologists or critics and historians of music. It is not obligatory to be a member, however

The Union and its local branches have permanent contacts with the public. As with leading intellectuals in all fields, the Soviet composers who gain prominence are public figures who play a public role. The case of the late Dmitri Shostakovich is a good example. The great composer, who was a Communist and a patriot, devoted much effort to community and government work and is by right acclaimed both at home and abroad.

The best summary of these observations of mine on Soviet writing, painting and music is made by going back to Lenin, who formulated the basic principles on which Soviet culture, creative activity and intellectual life are based. He said

Art belongs to the people. It must have its roots deep in the masses. It must be understood by the masses and loved by them.

**It must unite the feelings, thought, and the will of the masses and rouse them It must awaken the artists in them and develop them ”**

**Soviet society strives to have the people's culture develop in accordance with these Leninist principles The ill-wishers may not cease to try and malign Soviet culture but their efforts are in vain because the ideas of humanism will eventually triumph.**

## *Chapter VII*

### THE SOVIET PEOPLES AND NATIONAL FREEDOM

It is a part of the richness of the Soviet experience, in my opinion, that it can be an inspiration to the peoples of all countries. For the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America, for example, the really impressive feature of the October Revolution has been the national freedom and the startling development brought by it to the oppressed nationalities of the old tsarist empire.

The intertwining of working-class power and national liberation has always absorbed me. I grew up as an American worker with the issues of black liberation and of equal rights for other minorities always around me in the United States. In innumerable meeting halls and in the homes of black and white workers I had joined in endless talks of how racial and national oppression has been ended in the Soviet Union.

It was endlessly debated how this freedom and equality could be achieved in the United States. Like many other Americans, I never really understood how to struggle for it until I became a Communist, and then I never actually appreciated what I was fighting for until I was able to visit and see at first hand what socialism has brought to the many nationalities of the Soviet Union, and, further, what this liberation had meant for the overall growth of the socialist society.

Most of all, the question of national freedom and its significance was impressed upon me by my years of participation in the national liberation struggles in the Philippines. This is a country that had known 425 years of colonialism, followed, after a nominal independence from US rule in 1946, by decades of neo-

colonial conditions. There, in poor peasant huts, around guerrilla campfires, and in political prisoner cells I had discussed with Filipinos what the socialist solving of the national question would mean to the whole Filipino people, and also to their cultural minorities like the Moslems of the southern Philippines and the "non-Christian tribes" living in neglect in the mountains.

The Philippines was one of the colonial countries in Asia deeply affected by the October Revolution. The declarations in 1917 and 1918 by Lenin and the new Soviet state for the liberation of the peoples of the East—i.e., the nationalities in Central Asia held in the tsarist empire—from the outset had echoes far beyond the Soviet borders, because they could be taken to heart by all the many peoples of the Middle East and Far East of Asia who knew circumstances of national oppression virtually identical to those known under tsarist rule.

The October Revolution and its decrees, appeals and declarations began the anti-colonial revolution that was to triumph in Asia and Africa a few decades later.

Within a few years after 1917, militant Filipino trade unions and peasant unions had been given greater stimulation and were sending delegations to the Soviet Union to learn from its experiences. Filipinos who made that journey told me of the illegal routes that they had to take because the colonial ruler at that time, US imperialism, prohibited Filipinos from having relations with "Communist Russia." People from dozens of other colonial countries also faced all kinds of danger to get to Moscow.

This was not a matter of the Soviet Union exporting revolution, which is an historical and political impossibility, it was a matter of other peoples going to the Soviet Union to add to their own experience knowledge of the building of socialism, so that when the necessary conditions for change developed in their own countries they would be better able to respond to them effectively.

That was when the colonial system was still extensive, in the years before World War II. The tides of liberation movement rose unprecedentedly after the war and led to one of the greatest and most rapid of world historical transformations: the collapse of colonialism and the emergence of new, independent, developing countries. Characteristically, the newly free countries turned

to the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries that had arisen in the period, for material assistance in development and for the training of personnel to carry it out. This, too, was qualified as 'exporting revolution' by bourgeois censors.

Despite prolonged attempts by US imperialism to foster Philippine hostility towards the Soviet Union and to deter the Filipino people from taking advantage of Soviet development aid, by the 1970s the Philippines also had formed relations of friendship and mutual benefit with the Soviet Union.

Many Soviet people to whom I have spoken about the enormous assistance they have given to so many countries, which has meant great effort and even sacrifice on their part, have replied, with all modesty, that it is their internationalist duty to assist people struggling for freedom and to aid countries that are developing.

All Soviet children, literally from the cradle, are instilled with a dedication to internationalism and the brotherhood of working people of all countries. Nothing is more feared by imperialism and by the apologists of capitalism than this international bond that the Soviet Union has with the world's peoples and with their national aspirations.

The source of internationalism that holds together the peoples of the Soviet Union, is to be found in Lenin's teaching on the national question. It has to do not only with the gaining and reinforcing of independence and nationhood but also with the complete equality of peoples of all nationalities, races, and stages of development. Racial discrimination, for example, is not merely absent in the Soviet Union, it is treated as a crime.

Article 36 of the Soviet Constitution, which states that 'citizens of the USSR of different races and nationalities have equal rights,' also states that "Any direct or indirect limitation of the rights of citizens or establishment of direct or indirect privileges on grounds of race or nationality, and any advocacy of racial or national exclusiveness, hostility or contempt, are punishable by law."

The progressive principles of national relations upheld in the Soviet Union are obviously a source of alarm to those in the United States in particular who find it profitable to impose social inequality, gross discrimination and second-class citizenship on

black Americans, native Indians, Asian and Mexican-Americans, or for those in Britain who treat coloured immigrants as inferior people trespassing on British white preserves, or to both US and British imperialists who reinforce a brutal apartheid racist system in southern Africa.

In an attempt to negate the powerful example of equality and brotherhood that Soviet society exemplifies, capitalist propaganda has invented an enormous lie about the Soviet Union—that it oppresses its smaller nationalities, persecutes Soviet Jews, and maintains the domination of Russians over everyone else. A whole school of “specialists” exists, mainly in Britain and the United States, which produces and fills libraries with pseudo-scholarly studies of this alleged national oppression. This propaganda is augmented by the maintenance of “committees” of exiles—former landlords and aristocrats, and all kind of advocates of extreme “nationalism” of an exclusive type—who had fled from the Soviet republics of Central Asia, the Baltic region, the Ukraine and the Caucasus. Added to these dregs of a by-gone society are the Zionist organisations which have sought to provoke and seduce Soviet Jews to emigrate to Israel and which have stopped at nothing in their slander and subversion against Soviet society that has eradicated anti-semitism.

<sup>1</sup> A subtle aspect of this propaganda is the way in which the conservative capitalist press refers invariably to “Russia” instead of to the “Soviet Union” in its reporting of Soviet news. The intention is to blot out a comprehension of the multi-national character of Soviet society, and to perpetuate an impression that a “Russian empire” of tsarist-like ‘prison of nations’ still exists. If this may seem absurd after so many decades of absolute national equality under socialism it should be kept in mind that it is important or even a matter of desperation for capitalism to keep such an image, inflated and garishly coloured, to wave confusingly before the many new nations of the world that can benefit from socialist aid, or that would turn to socialism themselves <sup>1</sup>.

The truth is, the Soviet Union is not a single country, it is a union of countries composed of fifteen union republics. Within these are additional twenty autonomous republics, eight autonomous regions and ten national areas. All told, there are more than 100 indigenous nationalities, plus nearly 30 national groups from

other countries living in the Soviet Union All of these enjoy complete equality and have the fullest cultural identities, while in capitalist countries national minorities often have to eke out a miserable existence and are deprived of elementary rights, and that despite all the declamations in favour of bourgeois civilisation

US citizens are taught that their country has been a "melting pot" that supposedly has 'melted' together immigrants from many countries and cultures into an 'American' nation. This process, which actually has given rise to ghettos and national communities in cities that struggle to retain an identity in the face of pressure to conform or to be "melted," has been a hot-house for bigotry and racial discrimination that have plagued the whole course of US history . For Black citizens, Chicanos and other national minorities, that history has been one long struggle for the most elementary human rights. .

Soviet society, on the other hand has not merely preserved nationalities and their cultures and united them as equals, but has enabled each of them to retain its identity and to develop and expand to the fullest extent.

- Before I visited the Soviet Union I had heard much of this flowering of many national cultures characterising a socialist association of nations, and of the incredibly rapid development of peoples from backward conditions. When I finally saw the Soviet republics, the reality far transcended either theory or imagination

#### THE PEOPLE S POWER FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT

On a visit to the Armenian Republic in 1974, my wife and I took a trip out of Yerevan, south to the border with Turkey, where the slopes of Mount Ararat rise from the plain. Our Armenian companion, George Bagdasarian, drew our attention to the fact that at night all the prosperous villages of Armenia glow with electric light, but the poor Turkish villages, without progress or electrification, are still in immemorial darkness.

You can tell when you reach the border he said It is where darkness begins '

Sixty years ago, if anyone could be said to be in darkness it was the many peoples living in the southern part of

the old Russian empire, stretching from Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan in the Caucasus to present-day Turkmenia, Uzbekistan, Tajikstan and Kirghizia in Central Asia, and on up into what is now Kazakhstan. Their languages, literatures and art forms were all either suppressed or unformed, whatever small-scale industry existed was owned by foreigners or by Russian capitalists, agriculture was very primitive, political rights and women's rights were unknown.

The vast majority of the population were nomads, they lived in abject poverty, were all illiterate and cruelly exploited by feudal lords.

The working people in the Soviet republics have built an advanced socialist society and a modern industry through their own efforts, while their neighbours remain agrarian countries where poor peasants are ruthlessly exploited by local landlords and foreign imperialists.

These Asian peoples know about the successes of the Land of Soviets mainly from hearsay. They have heard of the major cities of the present-day Soviet republics, gleaming with modern architecture, broad planned thoroughfares, vast new housing districts, theatres, great universities, and art centres—cities that sixty years ago were shabby settlements, very much like their own towns.

They were clusters of ramshackle dwellings in which inhabitants died like fleas of disease, insanitation, hunger and overwork. Yerevan that had been an arid slum where dry hot winds blew dust and rubbish down rutted narrow streets, Tbilisi (Tiflis) that had been notorious for its filth and stench, oil-polluted Baku of the twisted alleys that Maxim Gorki said filled his memory with "pictures of the dark hell", Tashkent that had been a poor colonial town with the Uzbeks segregated in mud hut compounds, away from other people, Alma-Ata (Verney) and Frunze (Pishpek) that were dingy military garrison towns.

In Yerevan, an Armenian journalist Gurgen Arakelian, a well-known *Pravda* correspondent, told us of the meaning of Soviet power to his city and his people.

"You know," he said, "in 1968 we celebrated the 2756th anniversary of the founding of Yerevan. It is one of the oldest cities in the world. But the real history of Yerevan began in 1920, the year that Soviet power triumphed in Armenia. Practically

everything you see in our city today was constructed during the Soviet years”

Yerevan today is an outstandingly modern city. Its architects have won first prizes for planning and development in Soviet architectural competitions. Fountains proliferate now in this once dusty town, spouting everywhere amid the pink, mauve and light brown stone buildings.

That transformation is a fact that holds true for every major city in the Caucasus, Central Asia and Kazakhstan. These are all regions of old civilisations, crossroads of history, swept over by migrant or conquering nations, their peoples previously never experiencing more than a few years at a time of peace or undisturbed growth.

As Gurgen Arakelian pointed out to us in 1974, “This is the first time in their history that the Armenian people have known 54 successive years without invasion by enemies.” We asked him if the presence of NATO bases just across the border of Turkey did not make the people worry about the threat of invasion. He smiled.

“If we stood alone, as we once did, perhaps there would be cause for alarm. But we are not alone, our republic is a part of the Soviet Union, and it is Soviet power, the power of all 15 Soviet republics, that guards our border. Our people have been able to build in peace and with a sense of stability.”

This is also true of all the nationalities and national groups in the Soviet Union. The strength of its international community is indestructible.

Today’s Central Asian republics of Turkmenia, Uzbekistan, Kirghizia and Tajikstan, and their adjoining sister republic of Kazakhstan, provide what I believe to be the best examples of the carrying out of the interwoven principles of national freedom and internationalism.

During the colonial rule of tsarism, this vast region embraced a tangle of oppressed nationalities living in backward, semi-nomadic and feudal conditions. Under Soviet power after 1917 these peoples pointed the way for all colonial peoples to gain full liberation, solve the national question and attain progressive development.

Before the October Revolution Central Asia was exploited by

fast-growing Russian capitalism as a source of raw materials and as a market for manufactured goods, in the classic colonial tradition

To appreciate what happened in Central Asia when the October Revolution occurred one must compare the situation in the colonies of other imperialist powers, located far from the imperialist country itself with that in Turkestan where there was an influx of a considerable number of Russian workers and poor peasants, to work on the railways, in the mines and in the limited manufacturing industry, and to settle as farmers in regions populated by nomads who had no settled agriculture. Also, in the Kazakh areas in particular, many Russian political prisoners, including Bolsheviks, were transported for exile.

Contacts with the Russian proletariat that was acquiring militant traditions of struggle, and with its revolutionary vanguard, had a great impact on the peoples of Turkestan. A situation was created in which Russian workers and peasants, during and after the October Revolution and in the Civil War period, fought side by side with the Central Asian peoples to secure the Revolution in Turkestan, a phenomenon of fraternal relations that was a factor in later years in bringing about the voluntary incorporation of the Central Asian republics in the Soviet Union.

The government, headed by V I Lenin defined the tasks of national liberation. The famous appeal "To All the Working Moslems of Russia and the East" set forth the principle of the right of nations to self-determination declared that the national and cultural institutions of the formerly oppressed nationalities were free and inviolable, and proclaimed their right to develop their life as they chose.

This appeal was further reinforced by the Declaration of Rights of the Working and Exploited People<sup>1</sup> in January 1918, drafted by Lenin. According to the Declaration the workers and peasants of all the nations were free to decide independently at their own authoritative Congress of Soviets whether they wish to participate in the federal government and in the other federal Soviet institutions, and on what terms.

One of the favourite themes of imperialist anti-Soviet propaganda is that "Great Russian" power was imposed upon the peoples of Central Asia. A survey of the step-by-step development of

socialist national freedom in this region is essential for demolishing such a claim. Imperialists, of course, support the small, wealthy class of landlords, usurers, businessmen and reactionary religious leaders as the guardians of nationalism, interpreting their narrow interests as the national interests and calling the revolutionary overthrow of this class a suppression of nationalism.

The Communists, however, leading the revolution in Central Asia, supported the class interests of the workers and poor peasants, comprising the great majority of the population, as embodying the real national interests. In Central Asia national liberation went hand in hand with social emancipation as the only guarantee of genuine national development.

Very generous economic assistance from the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic was the key factor that enabled all the peoples of Central Asia and Kazakhstan to build their new, socialist societies. When I visited these republics, I was told everywhere of this assistance and the facts and documents were cited. This was indeed fraternal assistance, for Russia shared the last she had.

Progress that might have taken untold decades, was achieved in a remarkably short time under Soviet conditions.

When Marxists argue today that non-capitalist development is wholly feasible in underdeveloped countries of the world that have emerged from colonialism it is based on the fact that a powerful socialist system exists that can give assistance to such countries as was given to the Central Asian and Kazakh republics (which today participate in the large-scale international aid programme of the Soviet Union).

The Philippines, launched on a capitalist path but increasingly aware of its inability to satisfy the needs of the Filipino people, has seen the importance of public sector growth and has opened the way to Soviet and other socialist countries assistance to its development.

The key to real national development, however lay in measures for facilitating the self-determination of the nationalities of Central Asia. Division into national republics that subsequently occurred was not imposed from the top by Soviet authorities in Moscow. Implementation of the principle of self-determination included in the Soviet Constitution was left to the

wishes of the people concerned After a wide discussion by the people and in national commissions, independent decisions were taken on the right of the Uzbek, Turkmen, Kazakh, Tajik and Kirghiz peoples to set up their own national republics

Since 1936 all four Central Asian union republics and Kazakhstan have swiftly advanced as highly industrialised socialist sovereign states, their balanced national development assured with the whole Soviet society's readiness to render them fraternal assistance

The Soviet government helped to wipe out illiteracy and create conditions for national languages and cultures to flower, a broad industrial and a mechanised agricultural base was attained, and a large intelligentsia was created

All this was achieved not without sharp ideological struggles over the national question, vestiges of the tendency toward Russian chauvinism were sternly rooted out, as well as ultra-nationalist trends, such as the Pan-Turkic movement Its adherents rejected the idea of separate Uzbek, Turkmen, Kazakh and other nationalities and proposed setting up a Moslem state, essentially anti-Russian in character Such trends, encouraged by bourgeois nationalist enemies of socialism, were fought and overcome The principle of the multi-national state, with the principal nationality in the salient role, prevailed

No nationality, of course, was wholly gathered by force or persuasion behind its own boundary walls, as is claimed by anti-Sovietists. The fact that each republic is multi-national once again testifies to the truly international character of the Soviet country

#### SKETCHES OF KIRGHIZIA AND KAZAKHSTAN

The peoples of Central Asian republics have made enormous strides economically, socially, culturally and morally in the space of a few decades That is the merit of the Soviet government. The facts provide a powerful answer to lying imperialist propaganda about these republics being "Russian colonies" or "oppressed nations" where national expression is allegedly not allowed to flower

Our trip to Kirghizia and Kazakhstan gave the lie to all this

malicious slander The Kirghiz people are the largest of the 80 nationalities in the republic Kirghiz deputies, of course, hold a larger percentage of seats in the Kirghizia Supreme Soviet, the leading officials in the government are Kirghiz, and it is the Kirghiz culture and language that predominate

Similarly, in Kazakhstan, the Kazakh people prevail in every respect—culturally, socially and otherwise The native population are the true masters of their land—this is the rule in the Soviet Union

"These circumstances could scarcely be found in any bourgeois nation or republic in the world, and they testify to the careful consideration given to the nurturing and flowering of national freedom in the Soviet Union However, this salient role encouraged for the people who give their name and characteristics to each republic in no way implies dominance or exclusiveness or special privilege Everyone we met and spoke with in both republics stressed with pride that their countries were multi-national

The truth of it was easy to find On the 28,000 hectare Sintash collective farm that we visited, 50 miles southeast of Frunze, there were 17 nationalities among the farm's 964 families. The chairman was a Kirghiz In Frunze itself, at the big worsted mill, where we spent a day, the intermingling of nationalities was even greater 40 nationalities among its 5,200 workers

There were two people at the factory who caught our attention, one was the director, M Bolbekov who had come from a Kirghiz peasant family, his father was killed when defending Stalingrad M Bolbekov had studied at the Textile Institute in Leningrad He began at the factory as a shop master, moved up to engineer status, then became shop chief and finally director Could there be a better example of the development of the Kirghiz people and of their international ties within the Soviet Union?

The other factory worker we noticed was a 27-year-old Russian girl Nadia Lavskaya who was the only Russian in a large spindle department full of Kirghiz, Tatar and Uigur women She had been sent from Novosibirsk by the Young Communist League to help develop the factory's new work force Operating 612 spindles and overfulfilling her daily quota by 170 to 180

per cent, she was much respected by her multi-national work mates who sent her as a delegate to the All-Union Congress of Trade Unions in Moscow in 1972. Nadia is one of the countless Russians who have given themselves selflessly to the fraternal task of assisting the advancement of republics making the leap from feudal backwardness to socialism.

In Kazakhstan we encountered another, somewhat different, example of the role played by Russians and others from the western republics in that republic's development. At the Alma-Ata collective farm, near the capital city of the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic, we met the chairman, Leonid Stepanovich Manusko, who was Ukrainian by ancestry but who had been born in what is now Kazakhstan. His family had been among the Russian and Ukrainian peasant settlers who actively supported the October Revolution when it came to this backward out-skirt of the old Russian empire.

Chairman Manusko, Hero of Socialist Labour, is one of the outstanding veterans of the collective farm movement in Kazakhstan, which, in that region, not only transformed the existing peasant relations to the land but, equally important, converted Kazakh nomads to settled life and made them prosperous state and collective farmers.

On the 52,000 hectare Alma-Ata collective farm, there are 27 nationalities among its 5 200 members. During our visit they were in the midst of a series of meetings on the friendship of nationalities, part of the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Soviet Union then in progress. Said the Chairman: "We have many international marriages, and in recent years we have not had a single case of immorality." It took some further discussion before we became aware that the use of the word "immorality" had nothing to do with relations between the sexes but had to do with relations among nationalities: chauvinistic or prejudiced attitudes by a member of one nationality toward a member of another nationality is considered immoral in the Soviet Union—a striking contrast with racial discrimination and exploitation in the "civilised" bourgeois countries.

We learned much about the national development of Kirghizia from V. Zangrichanov, the Vice-President of the Kirghiz Academy of Sciences in Frunze. The solution of the national

question and the creation of the Kirghiz Socialist Republic, he told us, required a long preparatory period of economic and cultural development and of ideological struggle against feudal and bourgeois nationalist opponents of change

'Before the Revolution,' said Vice-President Zangrichanov, "this region was one of the most backward in tsarist Russia. Less than one per cent of the population were literate, 6 out of every 1 000, and there was no Kirghiz alphabet or written language. Industry was virtually non-existent, except for a few coal and salt mines. Agriculture, to the extent that there was any, was primitive cultivation. Our people were mostly nomads."

Feudal and religious elements had been very strong in the past, and they tried constantly to stir up national differences among peoples and among the Kirghiz tribes themselves. Tsarist oppression left a residue of hatred for the Russians, and it was fanned by feudal elements. It took years for national self-consciousness and class-consciousness to be rooted as well as the understanding that the interests of the Kirghiz and Russian workers and peasants are and always have been the same.

'If we had been left to our own devices, and had been diverted along the line of national exclusiveness, we would have scarcely progressed to the present day. However, we had the unselfish assistance of all the other peoples in the Soviet Union especially the Russian working class. Lenin and the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union gave much attention to the development of the Kirghiz people. To give but one example Kirghizia had known no sugar. An enormous sum of 50 million gold rubles were provided for irrigation in Central Asia and this enabled us to cultivate sugar beets for the first time, now Kirghizia is the main sugar-producing republic in Central Asia.'

Up to the Revolution, and for many years afterward, all Kirghiz tribes were nomadic cattle-breeders or horse-breeders, with virtually no knowledge of agriculture. Only some Russian and Ukrainian settlers did farming in this region. The actual process of establishing settled Kirghiz communities did not get well under way until collectivisation began during the First Five-Year Plan. Now there are 245 collective farms and 103 state farms in Kirghizia, each with an average of 50 tractors and 20 combines.

"Our own Academy of Sciences here is an example of how far we have come in that brief span of years. Prior to the Revolution, there was not a single research worker of Kirghiz nationality. Today we have 13 research institutes under the Kirghiz Academy, with over 1,000 research workers, 60 per cent of them under 35 years of age."

Even these scanty facts about progress of science in small Kirghizia make it possible to conclude that hardly any developing country, where national interests are ruthlessly trampled upon by foreign monopolies, can compete with it in any respect. The visible contrasts are still to be found in Kirghizia indicating old national traditions. One doesn't have to go far beyond Frunze to get into mountain valleys and grasslands where herds of horses, cattle and sheep are grazing, shepherded by two or three *chabans* (herdsman) on wiry horses. The *chabans*, clad in traditional padded jackets, wearing the conical felt hat unchanged in centuries, silhouetted against the rugged Alatau mountain range capped in perpetual snow, appear out of the landscape like wraiths of another time.

However, they are wholly figures of the socialist present. They do not eke out a solitary existence but are members of collective farms encompassing the mountain areas, as well as broad reaches of the adjoining lowland, farms that raise cattle, horses and sheep along with wheat, sugar beets, rye, vegetables, fruits and fodder grass. The *chabans* usually live in family groups, staying in remote upland pastures for weeks, but never isolated from the collective of which they are a part. Helicopters and motorised transport regularly deliver them newspapers and periodicals. They have radio contact with the collective farm leaders and transistor radios to provide them with music. Special stations dot the mountains, where they can receive medical treatment, have a rest and enjoy television.

Below, in the collective farm centres, may be found boarding schools where the sons and daughters of the *chabans* live in hostels and study while their parents are absent for long periods with the flocks. We visited such a school with its well-kept hostel on the Sintash farm and found that it compared very favourably with those we had seen in the large Soviet cities.

Today the herds that the Kirghiz *chabans* care for are col-

lectively owned by the collective or state farms, but each *chaban* family tending herds in places remote from the village is permitted to have for itself 25 sheep, one cow and one horse. Families staying in the village may have for their own 10 sheep, one cow and some poultry.

There can be found few nations in the world that have known the dramatic change in the well-being experienced by the Kirghiz nomad in the space of a little more than half a century. It is socialism and socialist internationalism that have made it possible.

The children and grandchildren of nomads live very well today by any standards. On the Sintash farm we chose at our own will the homes we wanted to visit. In each one we entered we found a television set, a refrigerator, a gas stove, good furnishings, shelves of books, art objects. Equally impressive was a house we entered where a farmer was just in from the fields. After greeting us with enthusiasm, this Kirghiz peasant displayed to us first of all his teenage daughter, pulling the shy girl from an adjoining room and proudly proclaiming to us that she was an outstanding student in the farm's secondary school. This was the pride of a Kirghiz man whose grandmother and probably mother were held literally in feudal bondage, kept in the *yurta* (a dome-like felt tent), with faces hidden behind dark veils, forced into child marriages, sold and bartered like chattels.

The former Kirghiz nomad made a leap in development. He is now a modern farmer skilled in mechanisation and in advanced agricultural science. Not less remarkable are changes in industrial workers whom we saw in the Frunze Agricultural Machine Factory operating automated heavy machinery in the plant's large shops. The factory had over 6 000 workers when we visited it. The plant exports part of its high-quality machines to 16 countries.

Socialism has turned Kirghizia into an industrial republic. Before the Revolution it had only 1,500 "industrial" workers who were busy making soap, or were employed at flour mills and tanneries. Today the republic has over 500 large modern industrial enterprises manufacturing machine-tools, instruments, non-ferrous metals, oil products, gas, foodstuffs, textiles and many other goods. Kirghizia has registered the greatest growth

rate in volume of industrial production of all the 15 Soviet republics. Since 1911 (selected because it was the last normal pre-Revolution year before the economic collapse during World War I) Kirghizia's industrial production has grown by 245 times. During the Tenth Five-Year Plan launched in 1976 industrial production in the republic is to increase by 33-37 per cent, the greatest emphasis being on the expansion of power industry and of mechanical engineering plants.

As in Kirghizia, the majority of the population in Kazakhstan were nomads before the Revolution. The transformation of the Kazakh national republic has been equally dramatic.

An enormous territory (in size it is second only to the Russian Federation among the 15 republics), it had been regarded as being mostly an arid wasteland, over which the nomads roamed Kazakhstan, however, contained immense mineral and agricultural wealth which its nationally-freed people have been unearthing with great enthusiasm ever since.

There are many Russians in Kazakhstan, who help develop the rapidly expanding industrial potential and the vast virgin lands Imperialist propaganda distorts this as 'colonisation,' a grossly untrue statement for the Kazakhs play the leading role in the republic.

The magnificent, modern city of Alma-Ata is architecturally a triumph of Kazakh culture, the distinctive national design motifs of which are to be found incorporated in numerous public buildings, apartment blocks and cultural centres.

We arrived in the city on the celebration day of the 125th anniversary of the birth of the great Kazakh poet, Jambul Jabaev. In the new, resplendent Lenin Palace of Culture, we sat to hear an international concert, in which Kazakh music, song and poetry were intermingled with Russian, Uzbek, Spanish and Italian, and others. It was a fitting celebration for Jambul who was a passionate believer in socialism and the friendship of peoples, extolling these in his poetry.

Watching this programme, I recalled that the first time I had seen and heard Kazakh music, song and dance was not in Kazakhstan but in Moscow, where in 1966 I had sat in the Palace of Congresses to enjoy a performance of a visiting Kazakh state company of artists. Such cultural exchanges among the re-

publics are continual, so that all Soviet peoples know and love the cultural expression of each other

Prior to the Revolution, there were but 307 tiny enterprises in the whole vast region. Today, after nine Soviet five-year plans, there are 28,000 or more factories, plants, mines, hydro- and thermal power stations and other industrial enterprises, while a highly mechanised agriculture makes Kazakhstan one of the granaries of the Soviet Union (in 1976 it harvested a record 18.5 million tons of grain).

It is the leading producer in the Soviet Union of lead, zinc, copper, iron ore, bauxite, chromite, magnesium and a score of other non-ferrous metals, around which huge processing industries have sprung up. Big new cities have mushroomed all across the republic, where only nomad trails existed half a century ago.

No 'oppressed' people could possibly achieve such success in so short a time. The facts give the lie to the 'colonisation' talk of the western propaganda machine.

Leading Kazakh members of the Alma-Ata collective farm laughed when I asked if any of them felt they were enduring colonial conditions.

I wonder what colony ever had the type of peasants we have here?" Chairman Manusko said "The wage is high, all members of our farm are well-off, and have savings accounts and all of them have long forgotten the poverty their grandfathers and even fathers lived in.

A Kazakh intelligentsia has developed in pace with the growth of a skilled working class and peasantry.

I recall one of the most stimulating experiences we had in Kazakhstan—a visit to the Kazakh State University in Alma-Ata. I have been in a great many universities in both socialist and capitalist countries, and I studied in the University of the Philippines, but I have never encountered such academic enthusiasm and such brimming, eager excitement over a university's role in national life as in that Kazakh institution of higher learning both on the part of students and faculty members.

We sat with the University's Kazakh Rector, U. Joldazbekov, and the heads of all ten university faculties, and the discussion literally poured over the table, everyone leaning forward to tell

eagerly of what the University was doing or had accomplished.

The Rector, keenly intelligent, a specialist in machine-building and metallurgy, was a typical representative of Kazakhstan's intelligentsia. He told of the creation of the University

Among the Kazakh people at the time of the Revolution only two per cent could read and write. Only 22 Kazakhs had had a higher education, coming from the rich feudal families. This condition of illiteracy was wiped out by the end of the First Five-Year Plan, i.e., by 1933.

In 1934, according to the resolution by the Soviet Government, our State University was established, with 54 students beginning studies at two faculties. Today we have nearly 10,000 students, about half of them full-time. A new University complex is now being built, it will accommodate 20,000 students. "As we say, our republic is advancing at cosmic speed, and our need to train specialists is constantly growing. At present our Academy of Sciences has 26,000 scientific workers, among them 8,000 Doctors of Science.

We are quite aware of imperialist propaganda about our republic and our people. Let me ask if the tremendous advancement that is clearly visible to all who would come and see us is possible without the utmost national and individual freedom. Our scientific workers and skilled workers—Kazakh, Russian, Uigur, Tatar, Korean, Dungan and many others—could not make the great contribution they have made to our development without the utmost freedom of expression and thought, and without full equality.

We think as Kazakhs and we think as Soviet citizens, that is no contradiction, as our enemies infer, it is socialist internationalism that makes us all equal and united."

Professor A. B. Tursunbaev, a Kazakh and head of the University's chair in history, took up the Rector's theme

'In 1954, US Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas visited the Soviet Union. He wrote a book about his travels, in which he had a chapter entitled 'The Soviet Colonial Empire,' referring to our Central Asian republics and Kazakhstan.'

'This man with a liberal reputation would certainly not render a legal decision without carefully examining the evidence in a case, but he made no actual investigation before rendering such

a fallacious political judgment. The Western authors, including Justice Douglas, probably think their arguments sound convincing to American and other Western readers, but they should know how much indignation they arouse among Kazakhs, Uzbeks, Kirghiz, Tajiks, Turkmens and others.

'Our workers, collective farmers and intelligentsia are toiling diligently. Let us take the great opening up of virgin lands. Over 25 million new hectares of our lands have been made productive, greatly increasing our national wealth. It was done through hundreds of thousands of volunteers coming from all the other republics, especially the Russian volunteers. Western propagandists maliciously use this fine example of brotherly aid to cite figures showing an increase of Russians in our population calling it Russification. It is a typical, absurd distortion. Our achievements are not only our own but are the achievements of the whole Soviet people. All of us work to benefit our Motherland, and not any imaginary colonialists.'

In my opinion, the Professor's words fully refute all the anti-Soviet allegations. Kazakhstan's development proceeds in giant strides. Its industrial output will increase by 39-43 per cent over the Tenth Five-Year Plan period, and the average annual gross agricultural output by 14-17 per cent. The average annual output of grain is to be raised to 25-27 million tons.

It is not surprising that Soviet Central Asia and Kazakhstan are the least mentioned in western publications. Full knowledge of these areas would have a powerful impact on nations and national groups aspiring to independent development.

The achievements of all the Soviet peoples are distorted or falsified, and the victorious solution of the national question and the tremendous development of the national republics are smothered in silence. Above all, an attempt is made to keep the truth of this from the Afro-Americans struggling after more than three centuries for complete freedom from slavery and subjugation in the US, from the Chicanos (Mexican-Americans), Puerto Ricans and Asians who all suffer varying degrees of racist oppression in the United States "melting pot."

The example of the Soviet nationalities is kept obscured for the black West Indians and the brown Indians and Pakistanis made the victims of discrimination and racist attack in Britain

where they have sought to reside and earn a living. The imperialists and their racist allies have decided that Soviet national freedom and equality of peoples must be kept from the knowledge of the oppressed black majority in the apartheid states of southern Africa.

However, wherever people, for reason of colour or nationality, are persecuted or denied equality, the solution under socialism of the national question has powerful appeal, and it breaks through the imperialist barriers of silence, misinformation and distortion.

#### LATVIA SOVIET POWER RESTORED

The history of the three Baltic republics—Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia—which all experienced the process of unification with the Soviet Union, provides a unique example of contrasts in ways of life under bourgeois rule and under socialism.

A small minority of pro-fascist, landlord and other anti-Communist elements that fled from these republics with the defeat of fascism in 1945 has maintained aging committees in the capitalist West, financed by US and other imperialist agencies. These have tried to distort and to slander the tremendous advances made by these republics within three decades since 1945, in some cases reaching equaling and exceeding the living standards and production levels attained by the other Soviet republics in double that length of time. Their strides in national development make the pipsqueak claims about "Russification" and "Soviet imperialism" by the reactionary émigrés sound increasingly absurd. As a result, the influence of the CIA-supported émigré circles has steadily dwindled.

In the city of Rochester, New York, USA, where I grew up, there was a sizeable Lithuanian community. They were mostly factory and foundry workers and had their own Lithuanian workers' club. I recall vividly the days in July 1940 when the working class in Lithuania rose up, overthrew the fascist regime and welcomed the Red Army onto their soil. There were joyous celebrations in the Rochester Lithuanian workers' hall and in the homes of the progressive Lithuanians whom I knew, which were

a fine demonstration of their class solidarity with their brother Lithuanians in their Motherland.

We were fortunate to visit two of the Baltic republics, Latvia and Lithuania. In both, in different ways, we were able to acquire an understanding in depth of the socialist transformation of these republics and of their strong fraternal ties with the other Soviet republics.

The allegation that Latvia and the other Baltic republics were unwillingly "grabbed" and "swallowed up" by the Soviet Union in 1940 is one of the longest-standing myths in the hoary anti-Soviet arsenal. In actuality, it is impossible to separate the revolutionary struggles of the Lettish working class, both during and after tsarist rule. As a province of tsarist Russia, Latvia was a centre of manufacturing industry with a well-developed proletariat.

With that in the background, in May 1917 the Lettish Rifle Regiments in the Russian Army went totally over to the Bolsheviks. A magnificent Museum of the Lettish Rifles is located today in the centre of Riga, where the fighting record of those regiments throughout the Civil War may be traced.

In November 1917, in elections to the Russian Constituent Assembly the Bolsheviks won 72.8 per cent of the votes in the Latvian province, more than in any other region of the country. Soviet power was thereupon established in Latvia, under Peter Stuchka as Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars.

If not for the invasion and occupation of the three Baltic provinces by the German imperial army in 1918, Soviet Socialist Republics would have been consolidated in all three at that time. The Latvian bourgeoisie, expropriated by Soviet power, ran to the protection of the German forces and raised the false bourgeois nationalist call for "independence from Russia," as the means of eliminating the socialist republic. In Latvia, as in Lithuania and Estonia, reactionary regimes were placed in power by German bayonets and these survived until 1940.

Every Latvian to whom we spoke referred to the events of the summer of 1940 as "the *re-establishment* of Soviet power."

At that time the Latvian people were forced to live under the fascistic government of the dictator Karlis Ulmanis who was prepared to let Latvia fall into the hands of the nazi aggressors.

This threat caused a mass demand from the people for a treaty of mutual assistance with the Soviet Union. The Ulmanis regime was compelled to sign such a treaty in 1939, guaranteeing naval and air bases to the Soviet Union.

The conditions of fascist rule, severe unemployment, poor living conditions and repressive labour laws and the intrigues of the Ulmanis regime to sabotage the treaty with the Soviet Union and to open the door to the nazi invaders—all this caused a mass discontent and led to a popular uprising in June 1940. The people demanded further Soviet troops to be stationed on Latvian soil.

Soon after came the upheaval from the people, forcing the capitulation of the Ulmanis government, and bringing to power a liberal regime that legalised the Communist Party and other working-class organisations. It held free elections on July 14-15, 1940, for a People's Parliament in which the Working People's Bloc led by the Communist Party won the majority of seats. Its first session proclaimed Latvia a Soviet Socialist Republic, and on August 5, 1940, the republic was accepted into the Soviet Union.

A Latvian Communist who was active in the Riga Party organisation during that momentous period, Leonid Rymian, told me with considerable vehemence "I must emphasise to you that it was our revolution. It was carried out by our people and by our organisations. They went into the streets against Ulmanis. We are everlastingly grateful to the Red Army for their presence, which guaranteed there would be no foreign intervention, the only thing that could have helped Ulmanis. But the Red Army stayed in its barracks and did not interfere. It was the Latvian people who re-established Soviet power."

In the short space of less than one year before the nazi invasion came in 1941, Soviet power had brought about nationalisation of the large industrial enterprises and banks, agrarian reform that gave land to 75 000 peasants, the elimination of unemployment, sharply increased production, extensive social benefits, and democratisation.

In defence of these achievements, the Latvian people resisted nazi occupation, the extent of their resistance measured in the grim statistics of nazi terror—one out of every five Latvians, over

400 000, were murdered in retaliation by the nazis, and over 300 000 were transported as slave labour to German territory

It was only after smashing of the nazi armies by the Soviet Union and the final, secure liberation of Latvia that it was possible to construct socialism.

As in all the Soviet Republics that I have visited, in Latvia I was interested in answers to questions about the national development of its people Had the national identity and culture of the Latvian people been enhanced and their material well-being improved under a Soviet Socialist Republic?

The total population in Latvia is over two and a half million.

Emphasis given to the national language is always one of the indicators of national culture In Latvia, the Constitution makes Latvian the national language, and it is taught as such in the schools The Russian language is also taught but it is not compulsory

Books printed in Latvian is one more indicator The talented Latvian writer is not only printed in large editions in his own language but in enormous editions in translations across the Soviet Union

This is a little-appreciated aspect of writing in the Soviet Union, and is an example of how writers in the national republics, including those from the smallest of nationalities, are able to achieve tremendous recognition and reward

The nourishing of and respect for all national cultures is to be found in many forms in all the republics, Latvia included

During a talk with Iilmars Iverts, Chairman of the Latvian State Committee on TV and Radio, I asked for an example of a recent day's programme on Latvian radio, as an illustration of the cultural policy He picked up the programme for the day and translated it for me It contained items of news, reports, and discussion of Latvian affairs and cultural matters, but interspersed were these.

9 a.m—music by a Lithuanian composer

11 a.m—half hour of poems by a Kazakh writer (in Lettish translation)

1 p.m—“The Art of Our Friends, the Poles”

2 p.m.—Lettish translation of the Russian writer Smirnov's short story ‘Gloomy September’

6 p.m.—a special programme about the great Russian actress, Maria Yermolova

'You may ask,' said Iverts, 'why we have Russian songs and literary works on our radio and TV when Moscow radio stations can be heard here easily. It is because we want to acquaint the Latvian people with Russian culture—or other cultures—via our own language.'

A Latvian folk song and dance festival had been held traditionally during bourgeois times but on a small scale. Under socialism it has become a vast cultural event, held annually, and on a far bigger, nation-wide scale every five years. Now, in an enormous open-air auditorium in Riga seating 100 000 people, it is featured by a 19 000-voice choir, the whole nation is glued to the TV screen when it takes place. In this small republic there are 30 major choirs and 25 folk dance companies.

Latvia's economy is associated with the most advanced technology now applied in the Soviet Union to producing consumer goods of which Riga is a renowned centre. Latvia holds the second highest per capita income (the highest is Estonia, Latvia's sister Baltic republic).

The prosperity and high living standards in this small republic are the result of extensive planned assistance from the rest of the Soviet Union. The raw materials for the consumer industries are supplied by the other Soviet Republics. Latvia is the lowest producer of electricity among all 15 Republics due to lack of natural resources, but it is first in the Soviet Union in per capita consumption of electric power, its high rate of consumption is made possible by the north-west power grid of the Soviet Union, the energy of the thermal power stations united in it is rationally distributed to all the republics.

- Output of industry, which accounts for over 65 per cent of Latvia's gross national product, has increased by 32 times over 1940. During the Ninth Five-Year Plan the republic's national income rose by 40 per cent. It is not surprising that Latvians make jokes about western propaganda that tries to tell them that they are an oppressed colony of Russia."

: In our visit to the Lithuanian republic, my wife and I had a different kind of experience that revealed to us the transfor-

mation in the lives of the Lithuanian people and the bonds that link them with the rest of the Soviet Union

We travelled to Lithuania with our friend, Alexei, who was undertaking to retrace part of the campaign road that his Red Army unit followed in driving the nazi invaders from the socialist motherland 34 years previously. He had been a tank commander in an armoured unit attached to the 3rd Byelorussian Front army that sped into southern Lithuania in the autumn of 1944, freeing Vilnius, Kaunas, Alytus, Mariempol and other cities and towns that had been in the nazi grip for over three years.

Some of Alexei's dearest comrades were killed in the liberation of Lithuania. He wanted to look for their graves. And he wanted to find, if possible, people in whose homes he had been billeted after the fighting, while his army was regrouping for the campaign into East Prussia against what was then Königsberg (now Kaliningrad).

"The Lithuanian people gave us an extremely warm welcome in every town we entered," recalled Alexei. His description of the Lithuanians who climbed on his tank with flowers and morsels of the meager food left to them by the rapacious nazis made me think in contrast of the propaganda that still goes on in the United States and elsewhere about the so-called 'captive' Baltic republics.

Like Latvia, Lithuania had been rejoined to the Soviet Union, in 1940, barely a year before the nazi invasion struck. The rapid steps to socialism that had occurred in the brief intervening year—the building of industry, the transfer of land from landlords to peasants, the establishment of people's power in all aspects of the society—had been engulfed by nazi rule within the space of days.

That rule was savage and merciless. One-fourth of the population of Lithuania were murdered by the nazis, who took terrible vengeance against those most active in building socialism. Villages were burned with all their inhabitants. Over 100 000 people were concentrated at one small town, Paneriai, and slaughtered. We saw the razed site of the ghetto in Kaunas where more than 50 000 Lithuanian Jews were penned and killed. Lithuanians, however, fought back magnificently. There were

67 active partisan units in that small republic. They blasted nazi communication lines as the Red Army returned, and prevented the fascists from burning many towns.

In Vilnius we met the chief editor of the official newspaper of the Communist Party of Lithuania, *Tressa* (Proud), Albertas Laurincukas, an old friend of Alexei's, who offered to assist in Alexei's quest. As we drove through the countryside, I told him of the Lithuanian workers I used to know in Rochester, New York, who enthusiastically celebrated the restoration of Soviet power in their homeland in 1940. Also my wife and I mentioned that we had known Margaret Cowl, the Lithuanian-American Communist, and had heard from her a moving account of her return to socialist Lithuania shortly before her death in 1974.

On hearing this, Laurincukas embraced us and told us that he had accompanied Margaret during her visit. Margaret, it seemed, is a heroine of Lithuania. Furthermore, Laurincukas presented us with a copy of a biography of Margaret Cowl that he and two others had written. Published in 1977, in the Lithuanian language, it is entitled "A Difficult Path of Struggle."

With these international threads tying us together, we journeyed from Vilnius to Kaunas to Kapsukas (formerly Mariempol), now renamed after the former president of the Lithuanian Soviet Republic to Alytus, looking for places familiar to Alexei from the days of the war. It was not easy for him to find sites that he had known. In the past 34 years Lithuania had been transformed by socialist construction.

"I think our unit was stationed here," would say Alexei, but now a vast new housing district would stand where his finger pointed. "Let's see," he would say again, "across the road there was a big empty field." But now a factory looms there, acres of plant buildings producing farm vehicles, or machine tools.

As we sped along a four-lane concrete highway Alexei said "In 1944 there were no paved roads outside of urban areas in all Lithuania. There were nothing but dirt roads and mud. And everywhere the people lived in small wooden houses and were poor."

## THE REMOULDING OF MOLDAVIA

The socialist solution of the national question can also be seen in the case of the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic, which passed through a historical process rather similar to that experienced by the Baltic republics, but with some differences.

Without foreign intervention, a Moldavian socialist republic would have been an immediate reality, Soviets with a Bolshevik majority having been triumphant by January 1918. However, in March 1918 reactionary Romanian rulers in alliance with British and French imperialism, invaded and occupied Bessarabia, tearing it away from the new Soviet state, and turning it into a province of Romania.

Only the Moldavian territory on the left or eastern bank of the Dniester River remained under Soviet government. In October 1924, by decision of the All-Ukrainian Supreme Soviet, this region was proclaimed as the Moldavian Autonomous Republic within the Ukrainian republic.

For 22 years, from 1918 to 1940, the Moldavian people were thus divided, living under sharply contrasting ways of life. Those living east of the Dniester built industries, collective farms and a thriving culture, and those living west of the river in Romania-held Bessarabia, experienced brutal repression and abysmal backwardness. Their circumstances had been backward enough under tsarism, but it was far worse under Romania.

Since 1918 reunion with the Soviet Union was the main popular demand in Bessarabia but Romania acceded only in 1940.

In less than a year the German nazi invasion occurred, virtually wiping out what had been built since the reunion. When liberation by the Red Army, together with Moldavian guerrillas, was achieved three years later the republic was devastated.

When my wife and I visited Moldavia in the summer of 1975, we found no trace either of the war's effects or of the backward conditions of Bessarabia's past. Virtually everything that exists in Moldavia today is the product of national development under three decades of socialism. The old oppressed way of life has been plowed deeply under along with the stubble of thirty harvests since then, and the harvests have been extremely fruitful.

Complete literacy was attained under socialism in a remarkably

short space of time In a museum in Kishinev is a list of peasants who received land after the nazis were driven out, only three could sign their names, the rest had signed with crosses. In 1975 there were more students per 10,000 of population than in Britain, France or Italy and there were 48,000 teachers compared with 624 in 1924 Of the total population of 3,600 000 in 1975, one-third were engaged in either full-time or part-time studies.

- Old Bessarabia had been kept denuded of industry We found that in recent years alone 500 large-scale factories and plants had been erected and that 58 per cent of the Republic's income was accounted for by industry Moldavia has almost no raw materials except for some building stone The industry and modern technology were made possible by massive, generous fraternal assistance from the other Soviet republics Moldavian national development and national culture have flourished within the context of the internationalism and mutual aid that characterises Soviet society

I was astonished by the number of simultaneous construction projects under way wherever I went in this small republic—factories, housing, roads, bridges, agricultural installations. Where did the labour power come from? One of the sources mentioned to me was the release of labour from the countryside due to the increasing mechanisation of agriculture.

Its agricultural advancement has made Soviet Moldavia a garden-spot of socialism Every strip of land seems to be cultivated or in use, in enormous vineyards, orchards, vegetable fields, or livestock farms Moldavia has a greater proportion of the highly fertile black earth—over 80 per cent of its soil—than any other Soviet Republic, or for that matter any other country However, it is not natural advantages that make for socialism or for development of any kind, but how they are used and what relationship the people have in them The black earth has always been there in the rich valleys between the Prut and the Dniester rivers but the people were in poverty because they were not allowed to take advantage of it. In Moldavia the national question was ultimately tied with the land, and only when the exploiters were swept from the land was it possible to make it really fruitful. Moldavian culture and Moldavian well-being,

these main indices of true national development, are the evidence of socialism's solution of the national question in this republic.

Collectivisation of agriculture was not completed until 1950, so Moldavia was able to benefit from the two decades of experience in collectivisation in the other Soviet republics. The republic quickly became the pace-setter for agriculture for the whole Soviet Union. Among the 15 Soviet republics Moldavia holds first place for produce per 100 hectares. This has been due to socialist methods of agriculture applied to the rich soil.

On the Romaneshti state farm, in the republic's Orgeev district, once part of Bessarabia, we saw an outstanding example of Moldavian prosperity. This state farm was set up in 1940, just after restoration of Soviet power. All that was begun in 1940 was wiped out in the war. In 1975, however, the farm had 3,060 hectares of which 2,600 were cultivated, 1,060 hectares of vineyards, 160 hectares of orchards. During the Tenth Five-Year Plan the vineyards are to be expanded by 1,300 hectares.

The state farm was the first agricultural establishment in the Soviet Union to launch a plan for comprehensive economic, social, and cultural development. It was a seven-year plan, running from 1968 to 1975. One of the main emphases in the plan was on mechanisation, and by 1975 vineyard culture was 80 per cent mechanised.

During Romaneshti's first seven-year plan the farm's profit increased by four million rubles and in 1975 was about 2 million rubles profit per year. This has enabled the basic wage to be increased by 50 to 60 per cent through bonuses from overfulfilling the state plan.

We were able to see the large-scale housing construction that had been under way. In the new housing area of the farm's central village, modern 2-storied, 4-roomed houses had been built, complete with gas, electricity, running water. Each of the four villages on the farm had a house of culture, a bathhouse, a library, a canteen, there were general merchandise stores, a book-store, a dance hall, a sports ground, even a farm music group. In the canteens, food was being sold at actual cost, with cooking and other expenses taken from the farm fund, three meals a

day cost only 60 kopeks. Medical treatment was free as everywhere in the Soviet Union.

Encouraged by the successes of the seven-year plan, Romaneshtsi was in the process of working out a new 15-year plan with similar all-round aims. It was planned to achieve an urban-type settlement, with the level of mechanisation much raised. "We envision a highly mechanised agricultural establishment in which the differences between city and village will be largely done away with," said Vladimir Solodilov, secretary of the farm's Communist Party Committee.

In its achievements as a single farm Romaneshtsi was impressive, but it was not the most impressive feature of agriculture that we found in the small Moldavian republic. More interesting was the system of farm amalgamation that was being carried out by Moldavia's collective farms.

The amalgamation process began in the Soviet Union in 1960-1961 and has been tried in various republics and in various ways, including the actual merger of farms to form larger units. It represents a higher stage of collective farm agriculture, in which the co-operative principle prevails. In essence, it involves the pooling of funds and equipment by several farms, each of which remains independent and receives its share of profits.

Moldavia was selected as a pioneering republic for amalgamation. It has been introduced for orchards, for cattle-raising, for pigs, and for other types of farm. The main aim was to raise labour productivity through the increased mechanisation that is possible through pooled resources. Some of the Moldavian amalgamations have had a profit of 20 million rubles a year, for distribution among participating collective farms.

In Moldavia's Ribnitsa district we visited an amalgamation for cattle-raising and milk production. It had already had a number of installations erected by pooled funds. One of these that we saw was a very modern cattle-breeding station equipped with mechanised feeding apparatus, artificial insemination means, prophylactic chambers, milk testing sections, where 4,300 cows were being handled by 28 technicians and workers. As calves, they are collected from member farms.

On a single one of the collective farms in the amalgamation it had cost 1,500 and 1 800 rubles to raise a cow properly In the amalgamated station, through mechanisation, it was costing 550-600 rubles It had cost 3 million rubles to erect the breeding station we visited, a single farm could not have afforded it In the Ribnitsa district alone 3 to 4 million rubles per year of profit were now being realised from animal husbandry of this type

A short distance away, on the territory of the same amalgamation, we viewed a fodder plant that was turning out vitaminised fodder brickettes and granules This had been erected at a cost of one million rubles of pooled funds, and was producing 300 tons per day, sufficient to furnish cattle feed for the whole district. Amalgamation in Moldavia is playing an important part in the elimination of differences between city and countryside that is a major process occurring all over the Soviet Union This coincides with the bridging of differences between physical and brain work which tend to lessen due to mechanisation and the growth of technology

While travelling about the intensively cultivated countryside of Moldavia, passing through its prosperous, neat towns where new construction was a common site, I could not help comparing the advances made by this small republic with the circumstances in the Philippines

- Philippine independence and the chance to overcome the colonial past occurred in 1946, almost simultaneously with Moldavia.

The contrast in development over the same decades is startling Moldavia started out with a population almost wholly illiterate, mostly peasants working the land inefficiently by primitive means, lacking in industry, urban centres devastated by the fascist invaders. The Philippines also began independent nationhood with an impoverished peasantry and an economy wrecked by Japanese occupation and the US military reconquest, with a much higher rate of literacy (nearly 60 per cent) and a larger amount of industry Thirty years later Moldavia had become one of the most prosperous of the Soviet republics, with advanced industry and technology accounting for 58 per cent of production, highly mechanised agriculture, and a thriving national culture, its people enjoying high and rapidly increasing living standards. The Fi-

lipino people, on the other hand, were still experiencing poverty for the great majority, extensive unemployment a painfully slow growth of industry that was mostly small-scale and accounted for barely 20 per cent of output, and an agriculture still held back by semi-feudal land relations and lack of mechanisation, the quest for a "national identity" was still a preoccupation, impeded by neo-colonial conditions imposed by US imperialism.

The other Soviet republics had poured unstinting, generous assistance to the Moldavian people, for which they had no debts to repay US imperialism, Japanese and other foreign corporations had poured investments and loan capital into the allegedly independent Philippines, but they took out of the Philippines in profits far more than they had put in, besides leaving the Filipino people with a crushing debt burden and a still undeveloped economy.

Socialism had brought a flowering answer to the national question in Moldavia, neo-colonialism had continued to stifle the national identity and national well-being of the Philippines. This same comparison could be made between the Moldavian republic and any of the newly-independent countries of Asia and Africa that emerged from colonialism in the past three decades. The contrast provides one of the most telling answers to the imperialist propaganda about nationalities in the Soviet Union.

#### THE RUSSIANS LIES AND REALITIES

A study of the national question in the Soviet Union usually has to do with the non-Russian nationalities and national groups. This is understandable, because the record of their development contains the most vivid proof of how socialism liberated peoples who had been oppressed.

There is, however, another feature of the national question that has not often been given the proper attention in assessing life in the Soviet Union. That is the role and experience of the Russian people in the attaining of national fulfillment within Soviet society.

The Russian empire dominated the rest of the peoples in a colonialist fashion. The Russians now make up the largest of nationalities in the Soviet Union—roughly 131 million out of the total population of 254 million in 1976. These facts have been seized upon by anti-Soviet propagandists to try to make it appear that Great Russian chauvinism has prevailed under socialism.

What is conveniently covered over in this propaganda is that the October Revolution brought liberation to all nationalities of Russia, the Russian people included, for they all had been brutally oppressed by tsarism.

The Russian people played a decisive role in the struggle against tsarism and counter-revolution, and for eliminating feudal hangovers at the outskirts of Russia.

The Russians, together with the other nationalities, have achieved a cultural revolution and staunchly defended the independence of the first state of workers and peasants.

During the Great Patriotic War, the Russian people displayed amazing courage and patriotism in the fight against the nazi hordes.

After the expulsion of the fascist armies the Russian people painstakingly and with loving care rebuilt brick by brick and inch by inch their historical architecture and cultural monuments that had been left in ruins. They did this when they still had not restored an adequate diet or housing for themselves.

The Russians do not enjoy any special privileges. They are patriots in the true meaning of the word. The Russian pride is intermingled with the pride of Soviet people.

The Russians are very fond of their cities. They passionately acclaim architectural monuments and historical achievements.

To place a Leningrader, a Muscovite and a Ukrainian in a room together is to set off pyrotechnics of friendly rivalry and comparisons of their respective cities, even football teams. But at the same time, all these people are permeated with love for and pride in their socialist Motherland.

Wherever one goes in the Russian Federation or in every single Soviet republic, there is the careful, prideful attention given to the preservation of the national culture, including artistic crea-

tions of craftsmen. The extensive preservation and refurbishing of old Russian churches and icons that has occurred in recent years is no sign of a revival of religious feeling but is respect for the artisans and artists who created beauty, and for the country's history.

Above all, what is preserved from the Russian history, literature and general culture that preceded the October Revolution is the humanist theme, and the theme of struggle against oppressive conditions.

There are no chauvinistic echoes in any of the literature, music, ballet, painting or history on which Russian youth are nurtured or that is brought to the peoples of the other republics—and this gives the lie to the anti-Soviet allegations of Western propaganda.

The humanism of the Russian contribution to the whole Soviet culture has profoundly influenced and helped to accentuate the parallel socialist features of the national cultures of the other republics, which in turn with their theme of struggle and brotherhood, have considerably influenced the growth of modern Russian culture. This process of mutual enrichment, which is astonishingly fruitful, is completely ignored by foreign censors of Russian culture who stubbornly wail about its "chauvinistic" nature. Such allegations are completely ungrounded. The work of Russian scientists and explorers has always been known for its internationalism which knits together all the Soviet people.

In my youth, before I became aware of the fact of Soviet socialist society, I was enormously impressed by pre-Revolutionary Russian literature and music. I knew Tolstoy, Dostoyevski, Gogol, Chekhov, Gorki Turgenev, Kuprin and others as well as the writers of American and English literature. When I first visited the Soviet Union I was as eager to look for the locations and natural settings of those literary works as I was to see the evidence of Soviet life. I was greatly moved when a friend in Leningrad took me—at night when the effect was the more impressive—to a preserved section of the city where Dostoyevsky had lived.

When a friend in Moscow took me to the Tretyakov Gallery and I saw for the first time that thickly-hung panoply of Russian painting, I felt deeply that uniquely Russian, half-mystical,

**passionate preoccupation with their land and people that some  
of us think of as the Russian soul**

**The Russians indeed have soul and they have broadened it  
since 1917 to embrace not only their own vast and lovely land  
and its diverse people but, in fraternity and humanity, the peoples  
of all lands, all the nations and all the races of the world**

**In their national liberation the Russian people have utterly  
shed chauvinism and have become supremely international, and  
there is nothing more liberated than that**

## *Chapter VIII*

### SOCIALISM, PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP ARE INDIVISIBLE

Beside the fact of the Soviet Union's economic strength and the steady growth of its economy must be placed the fact that it is a powerful nation in a military sense, and that that power keeps growing, too.

The anti-Soviet propagandist has always sought to portray this power as an aggressive threat to other countries. From the inception of the Red Army as the shield of the Revolution and of the socialist state, it has been played up to the people in capitalist countries as an army organised to 'carry communism' to the rest of the world. In many millions of people in Western Europe the belief has been nurtured that the Red Army is merely waiting for an opportunity to sweep to the English Channel and beyond. In recent times, the Chinese people as well have had drummed into them by anti-Soviet Maoist leaders that the Soviet Red Army is preparing similarly to plunge through them all the way to the China Sea.

As a resident in leading capitalist countries, I can readily understand why many people are influenced by such absurd claims. Anti-Soviet propaganda in general is designed to create an impression that everything about Soviet socialist society is destructive, harmful or menacing to human freedoms everywhere. Together with an understanding of the effects of this propaganda must be appreciated the nature of military power and its uses in capitalist society, and the type of indoctrination that its people receive to make them accept it: the emphasis on violence in its culture and media, the encouragement of distrust and arrogance toward other nations and peoples, the continual projection of

war and armed intervention as instruments of foreign policy and of furthering the so-called national interest. People are led to believe that this is the natural order of life in any society and that therefore hatred supposedly must be instilled in the Soviet people in the same way, as alleged preparation for launching of aggression by the Red Army. The notorious 'red menace' and "Soviet threat" concepts are the hobbyhorse of imperialist reaction.

My contact with Soviet reality over many years allows me to state that all this is a deliberate and blatant lie. The Soviet Union has proved its peaceful aspirations in practice.

#### PEACE POLICY

Each step by the Soviet Union to develop detente and peaceful co-existence is met with a demagogic question if the Soviet Union is sincere about peace, why doesn't it go ahead and disarm? Even some left-wing and liberal persons involved in peace movements in capitalist countries sometimes raise this question, asserting that a socialist country adds to the threat of World War III by possessing and improving nuclear weapons. These otherwise well-meaning people forget that the cold war tensions after 1945 were created by the imperialist powers precisely because they believed they held unchallenged nuclear weapon supremacy over the Soviet Union and therefore could dictate aggressive terms.

When I arrived at an understanding of capitalist society and of the need for revolutionary change to bring about a more just, more equal and more abundant life under socialism, I realised along with it that pacifism was not likely to bring it about. I came to accept the truth of the assertion made by the Soviet Union and by Communists in all countries that a distinction must be made between just and unjust wars.

The military aid given by the Soviet Union to liberation forces in Vietnam and to its socialist ally countries, I look upon with the eyes of one who has seen much death, blood, destruction and human suffering caused by wars and armed suppression, but who has become convinced that security and human freedom under peace are gained only by people equipped and prepared to fight for and defend them. I see these as struggles on man-

kind's road to a new society from which oppression and wars would be excluded

One of the outstanding features of the Soviet Union's conduct of foreign affairs has been and is its peace policy. The Bolsheviks came to power in 1917 with the slogan "Bread, Peace and Land". That the new socialist state then had to create a Red Army to fight a long Civil War against counter-revolutionaries and invading imperialist armies did not contradict the basic desire and call for peace. As soon as the socialist state had thrown out the invaders and put down the counter-revolution, it moved to put a peace policy into effect.

Since that time, the voice of the Soviet Union, of its government and its people, has been the strongest and most persistent voice in the world for peace, for general disarmament, for the disbanding of armies and for the reduction and abolition of arms budgets. The concept of peaceful co-existence between states theoretically grounded by V I Lenin has been firmly embedded in Soviet foreign policy from the issuance of the Decree on Peace in 1917. While the foreign intervention against the young Soviet republic was still in progress, the Bolsheviks persistently sought to solve conflicts by peaceful means.

At the conference in Genoa in 1922 the Soviet Union was the most forthright proponent of peaceful co-existence of renunciation of war, and of disarmament. It played this role in the old League of Nations and it has done so outstandingly in the United Nations, of which it was a leading architect. Agreements or proposals for the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, for the banning of nuclear tests, and for the banning of nuclear weapons themselves have always originated with the Soviet Union. The Final Act on Security and Co-operation in Europe, signed in Helsinki on August 1, 1975, by 35 nations including the Soviet Union, was a consequence of Soviet proposals and patient nurturing.

That detente, disarmament talks, the resolution of international problems through negotiations instead of force, have increasingly replaced armed conflict and international tension has been due mainly to the initiative and insistence of the Soviet Union, in concert with the peace-loving ordinary people of the world. These all have flowed from the peaceful nature and aims

of Soviet society, a society that can produce a Constitution that, as in Article 28, proclaims peace international co-operation, universal and complete disarmament and peaceful co-existence to be the aims of its foreign policy, and declares that in the USSR 'war propaganda is banned.'

During the Vietnam war the world became familiar with vivid striking photographs of Vietnamese peasants working in their fields with rifles strapped on their backs. They symbolised the readiness of these heroic people to defend themselves while going about their peaceful work. In essence, this has also been the policy of the Soviet Union in regard to its maintenance of strong armed forces. It is a country that has had to go about the greatest peaceful construction effort in all history with arms strapped to its back. Naturally much more work in the building of an abundant socialist life could have been done without carrying such a burden, but it has been necessary because the Soviet people have never known a time when the threat of attack was not present in their lives.

Every war that the Soviet Union has fought since its birth has been a war of defence against attack or aggressive threat. No one can disprove its peace-loving nature.

The creation of new socialist states has put fresh demands upon the Soviet people who are pledged to jointly defend the interests of the whole socialist community of nations. Counter-revolutionary attempts to "roll back" socialism have seen the Soviet Union extend its defensive military power to help thwart all such aggressive imperialist-backed moves. These steps have been wholly consistent with the principled Soviet policy of defending socialism.

People in capitalist countries under the influence of saturation anti-Soviet propaganda do not understand the peace policy of the Soviet Union, and especially do not understand how a country with such military power would not use it aggressively. Their own countries have had histories of "gunboat diplomacy" and are still in an era of trying to play 'international policemen' in armed interventions around the globe. The Soviet Union's role of giving armed and other assistance to liberation movements in many countries and to fellow socialist countries is interpreted in anti-Soviet propaganda as the same kind of policy.

My own view of this was shaped long ago. Let us remember the Spanish Republic of the 1930s and Vietnam of the 1950s-1960s. The aid extended by the Soviet Union served the cause of peace throughout the world. Peaceful co-existence in the world was improved by the Soviet-aided Vietnamese victory. It is not coincidental that international detente developed after the end of the Vietnam war.

It is not military strength itself that leads to war, but how that strength is used, and the nature of the society that uses it. Many people in capitalist countries, including those countries with a fearful record of imperialism, dislike facing up to the fact that their countries' armies have been aggressive and oppressive. Millions of Americans came to this realisation during the Vietnam war and demanded its end, hundreds of thousands, in opposition to the unjust war, deserting from the army or refusing to be drafted into it. Literally, the nature of US society was exposed to its people by the Vietnam war, and Americans rejected what they saw.

There is no such contradiction in the Soviet Union between the conduct of foreign policy and the viewpoint of the people. No mass movement or popular outcry ever occurred among the Soviet people against the international behaviour of the Soviet government and of its agencies. The understanding of foreign policy and of the basic line of peaceful co-existence is extremely widespread among the population, with everyone given a sense of involvement in it.

As a matter of rule, issues and policies are brought down to the people for explanation and discussion, to an infinitely greater degree than in any capitalist country. When Soviet representatives speak before the United Nations or other international bodies and gatherings, voicing a program of peace, disarmament and friendly relations between nations or when the same program is put forward internally at Communist Party Congresses, in the Supreme Soviet or elsewhere, the speeches and documents are not only printed in full in the Soviet press but are brought down to the people for discussion in their organisations.

A good example of this was the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe of 1975. In Western Europe and the United States this conference received relatively scant attention.

ular with children and adults alike), entitled 'Just You Wait!', has two main characters, a wolf and a hare. The wolf is always out to catch and devour the hare, an innocent creature of peace. Although the wolf gets into some violent situations of punishment, it is always due to his own folly and foolishness, never to the actions of the hare. The wolf is really a caricature of the hooligan type. A great debate occurred over this cartoon series, the majority of children writing to urge that the wolf and hare make peace and be reconciled.

In his book *Two Worlds of Childhood USA and USSR*, the leading American psychologist, Urie Bronfenbrenner, made a perceptive comparison of the upbringing of Soviet and US children. At the conclusion of his study of Soviet children he wrote 'All of this suggests that Soviet children of the future will continue to be more conforming than our own. But this also means that they will be less anti-adult, rebellious, aggressive and delinquent. During our family sojourns in the USSR, we learned to our surprise and pleasure that the streets of Moscow and other Soviet cities were reasonably safe for women and children, by night as well as by day.'

- It would be improper to say that the educational systems of the United States, Britain or the Philippines are responsible for the breakdown of social behaviour leading to such phenomena as the lack of safety in the streets of capitalist cities. Educationists in those countries are, as a rule, sincerely devoted to moral aims as well as scholarly standards, but it is the society as a whole, its principles and its composition of antagonistic classes, that thwarts the development of responsible citizenship. The schools must play their part in the preparing of individuals to be pitted against other individuals in the great 'success story' of "getting to the top" where only a few can stand, on top of the heads of the rest. Racial or national prejudices and inequalities, from outside the classroom, destroy co-operation and brotherhood soon after childhood. Exacerbating the social antagonisms is the educative influence of such 'children's literature' as the ubiquitous 'comic books' with their great emphasis on violence, pornography and chauvinism, and television with its predominant theme of violence, crime, warped relationships and anti-social behaviour.

Much of this indoctrinating material for the very young contains slander and grotesque falsehoods about the people and the leaders of the socialist countries, especially the Soviet Union. The Cold War, with its anti-Communist crusades and its depiction of the Soviet Union as the enemy in an approaching World War III, heavily permeates the popular literature, the television programmes and the films of all the capitalist countries. Inflammatory anti-Soviet speeches by leading political and military figures have been given constant publicity. These have had their effect on the young as well as on the adult part of the population. The young US soldiers in Vietnam who massacred entire villages—babies, women and the elderly as ‘commies’ and the ‘enemy’ had undergone such indoctrination from birth. Its effects are destructive of personality and of moral standards. This is inconceivable in the Soviet Union.

#### FOSTERING A POSITIVE ATTITUDE TO PEACE

For the adult American or Briton the press and other media (which also reaches Filipinos through US domination of the news agencies and culture) are little more than carry-overs of the juvenile ‘comic book’ specialising in sensational distortions of Soviet life or of statements by Soviet leaders, in elaborate falsehoods about ‘Soviet subversion’ and alleged preparations for war and conquest, in wholesale fabrications about espionage, and in alarmist claims of menace in every Soviet fishing vessel on the seven seas, in every Soviet treaty or agreement, and in every Soviet peace proposal. A propaganda of hate and provocation permeates even the so-called ‘respectable’ press such as *The New York Times* or the *London Times*. Obviously this sort of picturisation of the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries creates the worst possible climate for international relations and the most fertile soil for tensions and conflict to be developed. Lurid stories of violence, detailed reports of crime or glamorising of criminals, defamatory attacks on leading figures—none of these are to be found in the Soviet Union.

2. The Soviet press and all other media, on the other hand, are

so sober and unsensational in their treatment of international affairs, including conflicts when they do occur, that capitalist journalists call them dull. From *Pravda*, the Communist Party organ, and *Izvestia* the governmental voice, down through the considerable range of periodicals, the general tone is dignified, restrained, factual, devoid of invective or provocative statements. Editing of both newspapers and broadcasting is certainly selective but selectivity is aimed at minimising tension and conflict rather than inflaming it.

Of course the Soviet press does not hesitate to call a spade a spade when the situation warrants, but at all times it serves the peace policy of the country. The effect of this responsible press on the mentality and attitude of Soviet citizens can easily be imagined.

The Soviet press and other media conspicuously emphasise the positive and constructive acts, statements, agreements and tendencies in all countries and by all individuals and organisations, governments or groups, regardless of social systems. Anything that serves or enhances the cause of peace and friendly relations is given featured treatment. International gatherings in which broad organisations play a part, reflecting mass feeling, are given much prominence. Always the friendship of peoples, their common interests and desires, are put to the fore, while differences and antagonisms are either muted or, where unavoidably mentioned, are balanced by positive factors. The picture is altogether different in the West.

For instance, at the time of the 30th anniversary of the end of the war against fascism, in 1975, which was observed literally in every street, home, factory, farm, publication and institution in the Soviet Union, not on a single day but over a long period, *The Financial Times* in Britain, expressing the view of Western capitalist circles, published a critical article entitled "Russia Remembers While the West Tries to Forget," in which it deplored a Soviet proposal to send delegations of Soviet war veterans to West European countries to meet their counter parts as part of steps toward detente and peaceful co-existence. *The Financial Times* implied that there was something sinister and menacing about keeping fresh the remembrance of the most brutal war of aggression in history and its lessons, while there

was something noble and peace-loving about forgetting it and forgiving those who had caused it.

Imperialism has its own reasons for wanting people to forget the horrors of the fascist war and to blur their memories of the origins of fascist militarism. The most reactionary imperialist interests still nourish the hope of a war to destroy the Soviet Union and the whole system of socialism, and want their people to support increasing arms budgets for the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation that continually holds preparatory exercises for an anti-Soviet conflict, one that would be infinitely more horrible in its nuclear devastation. They want people to forget that the Soviet Union was their strongest and most dependable ally in struggle against fascism. On the contrary, by often delicate steps that check or reverse the war-making and aggressive aims and efforts of imperialism, the Soviet Union helps create favourable conditions for peaceful policies to be continued.

#### FRIENDSHIP AS A WAY OF LIFE

It is not possible to visit any part of the Soviet Union without encountering some evidence of its peace policy. Along the railway line that enters the country at Brest the traveller may see slogans marked out on hillsides or embankments with white-washed stones by the peasants on collective farms or by railway workers. Peace to the World! or Peace and Friendship Among Peoples! In the cities the same slogans are in tall letters atop buildings, and there are great coloured murals of black, white, brown and yellow peoples linked under banners of unity and peace.

These are not empty slogans but are translated into innumerable forms of reality. One of these is the Friendship Society. There are now 78 Friendship Societies in the Soviet Union, each established with a different country and having its replica in the country concerned. The Union of Soviet Friendship Societies maintains links with 135 countries. An immense amount of work in friendly people-to-people relations is carried on by the societies. The activity of the US-Soviet Friendship Society is an important factor for peace and understanding in the United States, as the British-Soviet Friendship Society is in Britain, but in both

cases they are compelled to play somewhat of a vanguard progressive role without official support and often meeting official hostility. This is not the case in the Soviet Union, where the USSR-US Friendship Society, the USSR-British Friendship Society, the USSR-Philippine Friendship Society and all the others not only have state support and endorsement but have affiliation and membership from an astonishing cross-section of Soviet life. Indeed, they are putting into practice a Constitutional provision, Article 69, which says "It is the internationalist duty of citizens of the USSR to promote friendship and co-operation with peoples of other lands and help maintain and strengthen world peace."

While visiting the Bolshevik state farm near Serpukhov, south of Moscow, I discovered that it was affiliated to the USSR-Indonesian Friendship Society and that this was not a mere formality. Indonesian delegations had visited the farm, part of a building had been devoted to a friendship centre where literature and an exhibition on Indonesian life were kept.

The same kind of tie with foreign countries is kept up by innumerable factories, farms, trade unions, institutions and other sectors of the Soviet population, which are affiliated members of the various Friendship Societies. Leading posts in the Societies are occupied by the most outstanding writers, scientists, composers, artists and other ranking figures. All told, more than 50 million Soviet citizens take part in activities of the Societies which, in addition to carrying on a vast array of exchanges with the various countries, hold regular meetings, lectures, film shows and exhibitions, especially on national holidays or the birthdays of great persons in the countries concerned. The USSR-China Friendship Society, for one example, has never ceased this activity in the worst periods of strained relations between the two countries.

Once my wife and I attended a programme at the Palace of Culture of the big VEF radio plant in Riga. It was put on by the workers in the plant for a large group of visitors from the German Democratic Republic, the VEF plant being affiliated to the USSR-GDR Friendship Society. The auditorium was packed and it rang with enthusiastic friendly greetings, an extremely warm occasion.

One can go anywhere in the Soviet Union, from the fishing villages of the remote north to the mountain herd stations of the Central Asian republics, and find Friendship Society members, active ones. Every one of them, if asked, will say that he or she does this in the interests of peace, and of understanding.

In all the lexicon of anti-Soviet hate propaganda there is nothing so absurd as the claim that the Soviet Union impedes human contact with other countries, erects an "iron curtain," or prevents people-to-people exchanges. Besides the flow of tourists which rises with each year (3.7 million visiting the Soviet Union in 1975, and 2.5 million Soviet citizens going to other countries in the same year), there is no other country in the world which plays host to so many delegations at every level and of every kind. Among these guests there are as many dedicated conservatives as progressives, the Soviet Union being prepared to welcome all visitors regardless of their ideology, provided they do not transgress Soviet law or behave in an anti-social fashion.

Guests in the Soviet Union, whatever their persuasion, are given priority in all things. Friends of ours in Moscow have told us of waiting for years to see new ballets or other performances because foreign guests are given preference of seats, but they smile this away as part of their contribution to international goodwill. They regard it as a special form of hospitality.

The attention given to acts or steps of international understanding, friendship or co-operation has no equal in the capitalist countries involved. Many Soviet cities are 'twinned' with cities of Western Europe, particularly cities that underwent similar destruction during World War II, with regular exchanges of delegations and holding of joint commemorative events. This has been done mainly by Soviet initiative.

During July 1975 my wife and I were in Moscow when the Soviet-US space link-up occurred, the latching together of the Apollo and Soyuz spacecraft. It was a gala period. The whole nation was glued to television screens, and the film of the joint manoeuvre was shown repeatedly for days afterward. This was a memorable event of peaceful co-existence between the Soviet Union and the United States and it would be a good thing, if there were more of such joint ventures in bilateral co-operation.

## REMEMBERING A WAR, TO PRESERVE THE PEACE

As on no other issue, the Soviet Government, Party and people are as one in their sincerity for peace. One of the best demonstrations of this is the All-Union attitude toward the Great Patriotic War and its remembrance.

The Soviet Union frankly proclaims that it will never let its people forget the Great Patriotic War and its significance, and it strives to remind all other peoples as well. In that fresh memory lies vigilance against threats to peace, a determination to maintain the strength that will make the enemies of socialism cease to plot its destruction, and an awareness of the need to keep world peace always in the forefront of all forms of Soviet international relations.

In Soviet literature, films, the drama, television documentaries and exhibitions the Great Patriotic War continues, therefore, to be a major theme, inspiring what is probably the finest creative work to emerge from the war in any country. It is creative work imbued above all with humanism and with the tenderness and depth of human relations, as in socialism itself, it is people who matter.

Not surprisingly, little of this work is made available to audiences in capitalist countries, where the war against fascism produced a literature of cynicism typified by the novel *Catch 22*, or films in which over the years the fascist enemies become decent fellows in other uniforms who happen to be on the other side and who are now fellow NATO members.

The significant thing about all this Soviet attention to the Great Patriotic War is that it has not produced any militarist spirit among the people, but has instead intensified the sentiment for peace. The Soviet Army is a reliable defender of socialist achievements.

The tendencies in capitalist countries for the army ranks to be a kind of catch-basin for the drop-out, the unemployable or the unemployed, often the lumpen element, and for a class line to be drawn between officers and enlisted men, are not present in the Soviet Union's Red Army which embodies the unity of workers, peasants and intellectuals and preserves its revolutionary character of being close to the people.

Although the Soviet armed forces are large and powerful, and although much productive capacity must be employed for equipping those armed forces with an abundance of advanced weaponry, there is no such thing as a "military-industrial complex" in the Soviet Union as exists in the leading capitalist powers as a menacing factor dominating policies and governments in the US and Britain and other NATO countries. In those countries a "military-industrial complex" links the military leaders with the millionaire private owners of big corporations that manufacture war materials, and they combine to exert pressure for huge arms budgets that yield enormous profits on contracts for which intense 'lobbying' occurs. Generals who call for more arms spending by governments are part of the 'lobbies' and after retirement frequently become directors of the corporations which they serve while in uniform.

A Soviet general may occupy a leading post but it is impossible for him to have a private tie with an industry supplying arms. All arms industries are publicly owned like the rest of industry; administered by the state, they can have no "lobbying" role, and are subordinated to the policies of peace and defence of socialism conducted by the Soviet Government. This is quite the opposite of militarism in the capitalist countries, where war-making policies are formulated in the boardrooms of big monopolies in the interest of realising huge profits, and the government, carrying out the wishes of private enterprises, is pressured into pursuing aggressive militaristic foreign policies.

In another sense too, there is no 'military-industrial complex' operating in the Soviet Union or in Soviet society, this is in regard to the economy and to employment. Capitalist economies, facing chronic conditions of crisis, actually depend upon arms budgets and military production to keep factories operating and workers employed. It is well-known that the Third Reich in Germany 'solved' its great economic crisis of the early 1930s through the militaristic state of fascism, and that the same crisis in the United States and Britain was not overcome until World War II enabled vast armament programmes to be developed. Since 1945, particularly through the arms budgets associated with US aggressive wars in Asia and with the anti-Soviet North Atlantic Treaty Organisation in Europe, the leading capitalist powers

have continued to rely on arms production to sustain their economies, the constant cry being raised that factories would shut down and workers be unemployed if this were to end or be curtailed

The Soviet economy does not at all work this way or have such crisis problems To defend socialism, the Soviet Union has been compelled to shift a large portion of its productive efforts into arms manufacture and to place millions of its worker and peasant citizens into the armed forces In the economic sense, there is no need for this, on the contrary, it detracts from and curtails the building of socialism in its natural peaceful way and the achievement of higher goals in the five-year plans

A cutting of the arms budget and a reduction of armed forces that would flow from the firm realisation of world peace would not cause crisis or unemployment in the Soviet Union but would be welcomed as enabling an expansion of productive industry and of construction and a release of able workers for the growing economy There are capitalist policy-makers who argue that cold war and international tension should be maintained precisely to keep the Soviet Union from full peaceful utilisation of its potential

In its peace policy and in its efforts to bring about and enlarge detente, the Soviet Union takes account of the precarious economic situation in the leading capitalist countries and of the efforts of their crisis on the masses of people who live in them. Consequently, as part of peaceful co-existence, it urges greatly expanded trade and other economic relations by those countries with the Soviet Union and the rest of the socialist part of the world which would help ensure employment of workers in industries associated with such peaceful exchanges

All these aspects for the Soviet peace policy are fully understood by the Soviet people, who are imbued with a mentality of building for a future of peace and of happiness associated with peace.

## *Chapter IX*

### A CHARTER FOR MATURE SOCIALISM

During the first week of November 1977 I had the good fortune to be in Moscow to observe a remarkable, historic occasion the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the October Revolution. The city was a colourful sea of decoration, red flags, great banners with triumphant slogans and illustrations, lamp-posts hung for miles with stars and other symbols of Soviet power, varicoloured lights strung everywhere, outlining huge pageants of the Revolution and of socialist construction on buildings. When the lighting effects were switched on, on the evening of November 7, the people, who had a four-day holiday, poured into the streets, most of which were closed to vehicular traffic, and in the frosty open air Moscow became a vast scene of festivity, lit from above by cascading fireworks launched from innumerable points about the city.

Standing in Red Square earlier that day, I watched the people parading in celebration. Each time I have witnessed such an occasion I have been fascinated less by the military display that begins the parade, lasting less than an hour, than by the "people's demonstration" that follows, the endless mass of people that pours into and across the Square for hours, bearing immense complex floats or displays of socialist achievements, placards, banners, flowers, pictures. It passes like a vivid panorama of what socialism means to those who participate in the building of it.

I walked out into the streets beyond the Square where the thronged demonstrators had formed up, city district by city district. What impressed me as much as the massed effect these peo-

ple created in the Square itself were their individual attitudes when seen close up. Among both marchers and those waiting their turn there was laughter, joking friends calling to friends and waving bursts of singing singly and in chorus, music from guitars, accordions and other instruments, even dancing in and out of the ranks. An air of great happiness and enjoyment permeated the multitude. It was in every sense a celebration.

A few days earlier I had been in the Kremlin's Palace of Congresses to hear the anniversary address by Leonid Brezhnev, and the speeches of greeting to the Soviet people delivered by representatives of the working people from nearly one hundred countries. As so many times before, I had the feeling that I did not sit there as a stranger, a foreigner, but as a brother, linked by tangible fraternal ties with the Soviet people around me.

These members of the Supreme Soviet and of the Central Committee of the Communist Party presented a different scene than the paintings one sees of the crowded chambers of the revolutionary Soviets in 1917 and 1918—workers, peasants, soldiers and sailors from the front in uniform jamming the aisles and the window casements in excited discussion on the creation of the new society. Here in 1977 the scene was not one of order emerging out of disorder, but was one of accomplishment and prosperity, of dignity arising from a job well-done. These Soviet people, men and women, young and old were the embodiment of well-being, proud and confident. Walking among them in the intermissions, I noted how many of them wore the gold-starred medal of Hero of Socialist Labour, or other awards for hard work in the construction of socialism, and noted the military men with massed ribbons won in the defence of the socialist system. One could read in the seamed faces of the older ones the effort that had gone into the successful completion of nine five-year plans and into the almost unbelievable struggle that defeated fascist aggression and rebuilt a country laid waste by it. During the proceedings occurred that moving feature that is a part of most Soviet celebrations—the sudden influx of masses of Young Pioneers, and then of Young Communist Leaguers, who pack the aisles and the stage and proclaim their readiness to take up the tasks of building the next stage on the road to Communism.

Said Leonid Brezhnev, reviewing six decades of socialist construction:

"Those unforgettable days in October shook the entire world. A new epoch, the epoch of the world's revolutionary rebirth, the epoch of transition to socialism and communism, was ushered in. It opened the road along which hundreds of millions of peoples are marching today and upon which the whole of mankind is destined to embark."

"We were the first. And things had not been easy for us. We had to stand firm while being encircled by hostile forces. We had to break the shackles of centuries-old backwardness. We had to overcome the enormous force of historical inertia and learn to live in accordance with new principles—the principles of collectivism."

"And today, as we sum up the main result of six decades of struggle and work, we can say with pride: We have held our ground, we have stood fast and won."

He went on:

"A developed socialist society, the result of the historic, creative work of the Soviet people, has been built; it exists and is being perfected."

'Honour and glory to the Soviet people, to the people who have been victorious!"

It was impossible to be in Moscow on that occasion without being aware of the enthusiasm that had been generated among the celebrating people, the victorious people. I had travelled enough in the Soviet Union to know that it was being duplicated in every city, town and village across the vast expanse of the fifteen socialist republics.

Of course, holidays are enjoyed, and in the anti-Soviet propaganda that appeared in the United States, Britain and other capitalist countries at the time, endeavouring to distract attention from the significance of the 60th anniversary, there were attempts to claim that the people were merely being entertained with "bread and circuses" in the manner of the Roman emperors.

The Soviet people, however, had been actively participating on a mass scale in the most important event of 1977: the preparation and adoption of the new Soviet Constitution.

No major law is adopted in the Soviet Union without being

submitted for discussion to the people Legislation is not just the province of the elected deputies Draft laws go down to the people's organisations and to their local organs, to be subjected to minute examination for criticisms, proposals and suggestions Most of all has this been true of the supreme law of the land, the Constitution

Throughout 1977 the draft Constitution was the main topic of discussion up and down the length and breadth of the Soviet Union It dominated the columns of the press that gave full coverage to the views being expressed On July 30, for example, all Soviet papers printed the report of the Constitution Commission of the Supreme Soviet on the progress of the discussion. Said the report.

'The draft Constitution is being discussed on a wide scale among work collectives and at places of residence of citizens More than 650,000 meetings attended by 57,000,000 working people had been held by July 20"

The Constitution Commission said that it had received by then 67,000 letters "containing evaluations of the draft Constitution and suggestions for its text". It indicated that the Fundamental Law of the Soviet Union would embody "the collective intellect and the collective experience of millions."

*Pravda* said on October 4 that it alone had received 30,510 letters on the Constitution, of which it had published 1,256 in a four-month period The letters, said *Pravda*, came from workers, collective farmers, scientists engineers, teachers, doctors, students of colleges and secondary schools, servicemen and pensioners.

By the time the country-wide discussions had been concluded by October, four out of every five adult citizens had expressed their views on the new Constitution Over 180,000 letters from citizens had been sent to the Commission, to other government bodies, or to the press Out of these had come 400,000 proposals for improving or clarifying the draft document

It is obvious from this that the shaping of the new Soviet Constitution was in itself a demonstration of the expanding socialist democracy that this fundamental law reinforces As a consequence of the mass discussion of the draft document and of the enormous number of proposals submitted, all of which were careful-

ly considered by the Commission, 118 out of the 173 articles in the Constitution that was submitted to the people were amended, and one new article was added

Commented Leonid Brezhnev, in his summary of the Constitution-making process

'So, when we say that the actual maker of the Constitution is the whole Soviet people, it is not an exaggeration, not just a fine-sounding phrase. It is a fact. And it shows that in our country we do not have alienation of the working people from political power, that the masses' distrust of everything to do with the state, that eternal feature of exploitative society, has been completely overcome.'

Since the October Revolution the Soviet people have had four Constitutions. Each has served a different stage in the development of socialist society and of socialist democracy. The first Constitution, adopted in 1918, formed into state law the revolutionary transformation from a capitalist to a socialist-oriented society, and the establishment of Soviet power. It was a transitional document that recognised the revolutionary struggle that was still sharply in progress, that put limits on the rights of exploiter sections of the population that remained in being, and that gave special rights to the working class.

After the formation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in 1922, resulting from the full carrying-out of the principle of national self-determination and the voluntary union of the various national republics that had been created a new Constitution was adopted in January 1924, defining the rights of the peoples and the republics. This Constitution however, still reflected the transitional need for the dictatorship of the proletariat to expropriate and to restrict the exploiter elements.

I was just developing in the United States, my awareness of the Soviet Union and of the meaning of the October Revolution and of socialism when the third Constitution was formally adopted in December 1936. I remember the impression made upon me by a reading of the text of that Constitution which, in a time of vast suffering and deprivation in my own country due to the great capitalist depression of the 1930s, gave Soviet citizens the right to work to rest, to leisure, to education to care in old age. That 1936 Constitution was a great historical landmark that

proclaimed the triumph of socialism in the Soviet Union, the completion of the transition from capitalism to the new society. It also announced that no more exploiters or exploiting classes existed in the Soviet Union, and therefore extended equal rights to everyone, without restriction.

The question might be asked as to why it is necessary for a country that has had no change in its form of government to adopt a new Constitution so frequently. Even the 41 years that elapsed between the 1936 Constitution and that of 1977 is a relatively short span in comparison to the nearly 200 years of the essentially unchanged United States Constitution or to the "unwritten Constitution" of Great Britain that is made up of a body of law dating back to the middle ages. New Constitutions haven't been adopted in the United States or Great Britain in that time. Why in the Soviet Union?

To that question the answer is simple: profound changes have been occurring in the Soviet Union as socialism has developed, and these are enabling the constant expansion of the rights and benefits for people, rights and benefits that can be recognised in law. In 1936 a socialist system had just been consolidated and had a long way to go to raise high the material well-being of the people, but in 1977 a mature socialist society had been attained, with a tremendous enhancement of the material and social circumstances of the people.

In the intervening years the very social composition of the country had changed. Between 1936 and 1977 the Soviet working class expanded from one-third of the population to two-thirds, and it has become a highly educated and trained working class with a high degree of technical proficiency and of all-round culture. For the agricultural workers and collective farm peasantry the changes have been equally great, with an accelerating elimination of the differences between urban and rural life. Furthermore, the different stages of development of the national republics, which were still very marked in 1936, have been evened out, those that were more backward having drawn abreast of the more advanced, with the latter's aid.

These great social changes have been inscribed in the way in which the Soviet Union is defined in the new Constitution. The 1936 Constitution, in its Article I, said that "The Union of

Soviet Socialist Republics shall be a socialist state of workers and peasants." In the 1977 Constitution, however, the definition is greatly broadened, in Article I "The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is a socialist state of the whole people, expressing the will and interests of the workers, peasants, and intelligentsia, the working people of all the nations and nationalities of the country" (My italics—W.P.)

These changes have been made possible, in the first place, by the enormous growth in the Soviet economy. Under socialism, material development enriches not only the material conditions of life of the people, but leads to an expansion of their rights and freedoms. A number of new rights and freedoms thus appear in the 1977 Constitution—the right to housing, and to the enjoyment of cultural benefits, the freedom of scientific, technical and artistic work—which are associated with the capacity of the society to produce the means through which these can be exercised.

Of far-reaching significance, too, are the newly-defined rights of individuals to participate in the management of state and public affairs, and to make proposals and to criticise the management of state and public organisations. It is to be noted that these new Constitutional features were being discussed by the Soviet people and adopted precisely at the time when anti-Soviet propaganda in the capitalist West was trying to create an impression that the Soviet people do not enjoy democracy.

The new 1977 Soviet Constitution goes further than its predecessors in another important respect: it stresses the fact that socialism in the Soviet Union has matured to the point where it can already undertake the construction of the next great stage in the society's development. This is stated in the preamble:

Developed socialist society is a natural, logical stage on the road to Communism.

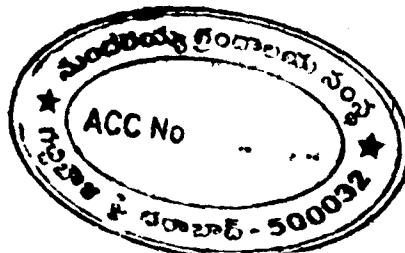
The supreme goal of the Soviet state is the building of a classless communist society in which there will be public, communist self-government. The main aims of the people's socialist state are to lay the material and technical foundation of communism, to perfect socialist social relations and transform them into communist relations, to mould the citizen of communist society, to raise the people's living and cultural standards, to safe-

guard the country's security, and to further the consolidation of peace and development of international cooperation

When I was witnessing the discussions and adoption of the new Constitution, this charter for mature socialism what came into my view was the emerging communist society that in many ways is now being shaped

Visiting in Moscow in November 1977, observing the enthusiasm with which the people were celebrating their 60th anniversary of Soviet power, I remembered all that I had seen and studied in the Soviet Union in many visits spread over the years. I thought about the decades of my own fraternal relationship with the Soviet Union and of my participation in common cause with the Soviet people for the advancement of mankind. For me, too, it was a celebration, of the decades of hope and confidence that the Soviet Union has given me, and of the tremendous changes wrought by its existence in the world that I have known

I walked among the celebrating Soviet citizens and felt proud to be a friend and brother of the builders of a new world.



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